THE ENGLISH WRITINGS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

VOLUME THREE

A Miscellany

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Acknowledgements

MY DEEPEST GRATITUDE is due to Sahitya Akademi, particularly to its Secretary, Professor Indra Nath Chaudhuri, without whose initiative and encouragement this project would not have materialized. I am also grateful to Rabindra Bhavan, Visva-Bharati, especially to its librarian Srimati Supriya Roy. I thank poet Sankha Ghosh and Professor Swapan Majumdar for their intellectual generosity. I thank Sri Kalyan Kumar Kundu (India Society, London), Sri Anath Nath Das (Visva-Bharati), and Dr Per Sorbom (The Swedish Institute) for making some rare articles of Tagore available to me. I thank Sri Arun De and Professor Suhas Chakravarty for giving me several pieces of useful information. My gratitude to Srimati Indira Chandrasekhar for editing the manuscript with care and to Sri Buddhadev Bhattacharya whose involvement with this work will remain everfresh in my memory.

Delhi SISIR KUMAR DAS

Introduction

I

THIS VOLUME IS a collection of different genres of writings of Tagore. Unlike the previous two, neither does it have a close-knit structure, nor are the sections into which it is divided mutually exclusive. The materials presented here have been divided into four broad sections of varying lengths. The first section contains six prose works of Tagore. Among them, *Letters to a Friend* (1928) and *Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore* (1929) are edited by C.F. Andrews. The former is a collection of letters written by Tagore to Andrews on various political and moral issues; the latter is an anthology of short pieces of meditative prose, thematically connected with Tagore's Bengali religious discourses collected in the *Śāntiniketan* lectures. *The Religion of Man* (1931), delivered as the Hibbert lectures at Oxford in 1930, is a comprehensive and powerful exposition of his understanding of the meaning and significance of religion in the cultural history of man. The remaining three works are not so well known, nonetheless they are of great interest to Tagore scholars. *Mahatmaji and the Depressed Humanity* (1932) is an assortment of articles occasioned by Mahatmaji's fast in protest against the Puna pact. *East and West* (1935) published from Paris is an exchange of letters between Gilbert Murray and Tagore. And *Man* (1937) is an address at Andhra University.

The second section brings together a number of lectures and addresses delivered by Tagore at different places in India and abroad—some of them were delivered several times with occasional changes—in chronological order. The first essay, 'Race Conflict', was written in 1912 during his stay at Urbana when he was still an unknown figure in the West, and the last, 'Crisis in Civilization', was written and read a few months before his death in 1941. This selection thus presents a record of the continuous growth of Tagore's thoughts and ideas during the last thirty years of his distinguished career. Only a few of these writings were issued as pamphlets, or had found place in anthologies. Most of them had remained imprisoned in journals and periodicals. This is the first attempt to collect them.

Apart from their literary merit, these essays are important in the study of modern Indian thought, since they are significant utterances by a man who more than anyone else among his contemporaries admirably represented his country during a turbulent period of its history. Thematically wide in range and varied in character, some of them are prophetic in vision. Some are poignant expressions of an agonized mind concerned with the welfare of mankind, and all of them, almost without exception, are profound in thought and elegant in expression.

The next section, also chronologically arranged, is a collection of occasional writings, namely, messages, tributes, public statements, open letters, and so on. They present an even wider range of themes, both mundane and profound, and manifest Tagore's concern and curiosity about almost everything valuable in life. 'Tagore's enormous merit consists in this,' Aldous Huxley once wrote, 'that he was at once a great idealist and a practical man of actions.'[1] His stature and success as a man of action may be debatable, but undoubtedly, what gives Tagore uniqueness among artists and thinkers is not only his deep concern and abiding interest in the political and social and economic life of the people, but also his direct involvement with works normally considered 'unpoetic'. Contrary to the popular image of a romantic and a mystic, he was deeply involved with the practical problems of education and rural construction in India, as well as with the problems of industrialization and organization all over the world. Anyone familiar with Tagore's concept of *ātma śakti* (literally, 'one's own strength') cannot fail to notice its resemblance with what the modern political thinkers call 'empowerment'. He thought of a different paradigm of development, preparing the individual to participate in the larger process of development instead of creating institutions without a meaningful relationship between individuals and the process of development. Writings belonging to these two sections are eloquent evidence of this aspect of his personality which was moulded by a philosophy of life-affirmation and humanism.

Equally significant and exciting is the last section which is devoted to conversations and interviews. From 1912 onwards Tagore came into frequent touch with the finest minds of his time. During his extensive foreign tours that began three years later, he met several great individuals. They include poets and novelists, scientists and politicians, kings and diplomats, educationalists and scholars, religious leaders and philosophers, and performing artists. Unfortunately, very little is preserved of the conversations he had with them and the opinions he expressed on various themes and issues during these interviews. His associates who accompanied him during his numerous travels in India and abroad, were too late in realizing their responsibility to posterity.[2] Authentic records of only a few meetings are available and we have put them together in this section.[3]

It will not be unfair to claim that the present volume includes *almost all* the scattered writings of Tagore in English. It is not unlikely that a few stray articles—particularly the short prefaces and forewords that Tagore wrote to various books—might have escaped our notice or could not be procured by the time this manuscript was sent to the press. But what we have *not* included, as a matter of policy, is Tagore's correspondence. This editorial decision needs an apology.

We are aware of the literary merit as well as the historical importance of the letters of Tagore. He, like his predecessor, the great Urdu poet Ghalib, was a master of epistolary prose. He had written several thousand letters. More than a dozen volumes of his Bengali letters have been published so far and the rest, so far uncollected, will fill as many volumes.[4] All these letters are not personal in nature; in fact, only a small part of them is really 'private' and intimate. Some of them, such as *Letters from Russia*, are serious socio-political discourses in epistolary form.[5] The corpus of Tagore's letters in English is not

as copious and varied as it is in Bengali. But it is large enough, and also of great importance, being a record of the correspondence with some of the greatest figures of this century, which includes Gandhi and Rolland.

Barring *The Imperfect Encounter*,[6] edited by Mary Lago, which covers the Tagore–Rothenstein correspondence, no scholarly edition of Tagore's correspondence is available yet.[7] Our decision to exclude the letters has not been prompted by the absence of scholarly editions but by the unavailability of the correspondence in full. In the absence of the response of one of the participants, the letters of the other are likely to be denuded of their contexts. They would appear like, to use a Tagorean simile, a bird bereft of one wing. This is, however, not to deny the value of the available material, howsoever truncated. We want them to be preserved with care and love. But this volume, like the golden boat in a popular Tagore poem, overfull with harvest, does not have any more room to accommodate them. The letters deserve a separate volume.

II

The major part of the writings collected here is not 'literary' in character: they are neither translations of his Bengali creative writings nor critical writings on literature or the other arts. This is also generally true about most of the English writings of Tagore, their theme being mostly politics and religion and education and general philosophical problems. His writings on literary problems are very few indeed. This large body of 'non-literary' writings is an inevitable byproduct of Tagore's decision to accept bilingualism as a necessity. The immediate effect of that decision, it is worth repeating, was his sudden transformation from a writer in a 'minor' language to a world figure. But in the case of Tagore, the choice of English was not a simple 'code-switching', nor was it a mere choice of one language in preference to another—such examples are not rare in Indian literary history—it was a compulsion arising out of the predicaments faced by the speakers of 'minor' languages anywhere in the world. That compulsion was further intensified by the colonial power that created a new hierarchy of languages in India. Tagore did *not* switch from Bengali to English; he remained as prolific in Bengali as before. The success of the English *Gitanjali* and the fame that followed it only enhanced the longevity of his bilingual career which continued without a break till the end of his life. And this makes him unique among the known 'bilingual' writers in the world. He wrote in two languages simultaneously.

We have noted what a momentous decision it was for him to be his own translator. The initial success would have been satisfying enough for any writer, but in the case of Tagore it also generated new demands, not necessarily congenial to a writer. A significant part of his creative time was consumed by translation activities and various other non-literary works. Rothenstein wrote about this situation in his autobiography with unfortunate sarcasm:

> But great fame is a perilous thing.... Tagore, who had hitherto lived quietly in Bengal, devoting himself to poetry and his school, would now grow restless. As a man longs for wine or tobacco, so Tagore could not resist the sympathy shown to a great idealist. He wanted to heal the wounds of the world. But a poet, shutting himself away from men

to concentrate on his art, most helps his fellows; to leave his study is to run great risks. No man respected truth, strength of character; single-mindedness and selflessness more than Tagore, of these qualities he had his full share. But he got involved in contradiction.[8]

Since Rothenstein's facile diagnosis of 'contradiction' has been reiterated by several Tagore critics, it is necessary to examine it carefully and to try to understand Tagore's predicament with reference to his bilingualism which is so deeply connected with his international reputation. Soon after the success of *Gitanjali* he realized that restoration of the earlier status of a monolingual writer was no longer possible for him. He did the thing he could do: he distributed the added work between himself and his translators. We have discussed this situation in the introduction to the second volume. The English writings of Tagore are, apart from many things else, documents of the predicaments of an author firmly anchored in a 'minor' language whom history forced to negotiate with a 'major' language. His bilingualism was inescapable.

Another feature, seemingly trivial, that made bilingualism a permanent feature of Tagore's life and consequently problematized his creative activities and intellectual responses, was his extensive travel all over the world. It began from 1912. His travels outside Bengal and India prior to that year—Tagore had visited Europe twice before that—did not cause any linguistic problem in his literary career. On both occasions he wrote about his English experiences in Bengali. That situation changed almost abruptly from 1912. It is necessary to emphasize that Tagore did not have the slightest illusion about his importance as a creative writer in English. He was as acutely conscious of the fragility of his fame in a foreign language, as he was aware of his permanence in his own. The decision to translate his own poems into English was taken by Tagore without any external pressure. It started as a recreation and not as a long-term project. It was a sudden decision. Even more sudden and propelled totally by external forces was the beginning of his career as a writer of English prose. It began with the lectures at the invitation of the Unitarians, the overseas cousins of the Brahmo Samaj.[9] Then came the Nobel prize, and with it a new responsibility, that of representating India to the world, very much like that of Keshab Chandra Sen and Swami Vivekananda before him. Sen and Vivekananda were religious leaders and both had the definite agenda of introducing India to an antagonistic West and to claim its spiritual superiority. Tagore was not a religious leader and certainly he had never thought of carrying such responsibilities. But when that responsibility was conferred upon him by circumstances, he accepted it willingly. Not only are the representation of India and the extensive travels intimately connected, but they made Tagore's engagement with the English language almost permanent. It is, however, incorrect to think—as Rothenstein thought and many people in India still believe—that Tagore developed in the role of a religious and social thinker solely because of his international distinction. From the very beginning of his literary career Tagore took great interest in political and social and religious activities in India and abroad, and by 1912, before his third visit to Europe, he had already assumed the stature of a seminal thinker in Bengal. His activities were not confined within the pensive citadels of art, they went beyond 'poetry and his school'. International recognition did not

change but only extended the sphere of his activities. Most important is the fact that Tagore did not find any contradiction between his artistic activities and his other social commitments. Nonetheless they did create a tension, an unending one, in his life. From time to time he would cry out in exasperation: 'I am only a poet.' But the truth was he was not only a poet.

III

Tagore spent the period between May 1916 and February the next year in Japan and the USA. Another spell of foreign travel began in May 1920 which continued till July 1921. This was followed by a short visit to Sri Lanka in October 1922. In March 1924 he went to China—where he had the most stormy receptions of his life. This was followed by an accidental, but pleasant, visit to Argentina in September 1924, where he stayed till the beginning of the next year, with a brief stopover in Italy on the way back home. The next year he went to Italy—a visit that generated strong controversy—and then to several other countries in Europe, and finally to Egypt, before returning to India. In the next few years he visited several countries in South-East Asia and Sri Lanka and Canada and the USA and Japan, as well as different countries in Europe including Soviet Russia. Even at the ripe age of 71, in 1932, he responded to an invitation from Persia and two years later he visited Sri Lanka again—his last journey outside India. These were in addition to his frequent travels within the Indian subcontinent.

This quick resumé of Tagore's travel abroad[10] should not be dismissed as a trivial account of his wanderlust. It provides the necessary context, both psychological and political, to his English writings as well. The longing for distance—'I am restless, I long for the distant', he writes in one of his poems—or the urgency to collect funds for his international university which became the most cherished ambition of his life—'Visva Bharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of life's best treasure', he wrote to Gandhi—were strong enough motivation for his continuous travel. But the other important reason was his commitment to the new responsibility of representing India. These travels to different countries had a special significance in his life. Just before he left for England in 1912 he described the journey as *tīrtha yātrā* (a pilgrimage).[11] And again in 1932, he wrote, 'it was to know this great humanity, the ever-awake spirit of man that one day I took leave of my home for a far away pilgrimage to Europe in the year 1912'.[12] The relation between this role and the compulsion of using the English language is inseparable. But his bilingualism was also fraught with an unfortunate contradiction determining the nature of his reception abroad as well as his own response to foreign audiences. As a Bengali writer he communicated with a more or less homogeneous cultural group: his audience was identified by the language he used. On the other hand, the linguistically alien audiences abroad determined his medium of communication. The roles of languages were reversed with respect to his different roles. As a creative writer he governed the language, but as an Indian messenger he was governed by the language. Being fully aware of the implications of such linguistic predicaments he kept the two languages separate for two different functions. The travels of Tagore, to give an example, have two different linguistic manifestations. They acted as the stimulus for

many delightful travelogues in Bengali, and occasionally for poems such as 'Sāgarikā' (The Ocean-born) written during his travels in Java. They are records of his responses and reactions to alien cultures and peoples and nature. In his Bengali travelogues the alien and India, the other and the self, are interposed as if in a musical structure to create a harmony out of a relationship of opposition. There is a delight in observing things around him: the ordinary, the simple, the trivial, and yet so rich in human terms. A few examples are given here. The first passage describes a house and its surroundings during his visit to the English countryside in 1912:

When we reached the house our hostess took us to the warm drawing room where a fire had been lit. The house was not an old parsonage but a new one; the garden was also new, perhaps they had themselves cultivated it—clusters of many coloured flowers fringed the deep lawn. I had never seen such profusion, such freshness of foliage. It is unbelievable, unless one has seen it, how richly green and thick the grass can be.... In the late afternoon my host Mr Outram took us on a walk; the rain had stopped, but there was no gap in the clouds. On all sides was the deep green of undulating meadows divided by low hedges. Though hilly, the landscape had nowhere the roughness of hills; earth's exuberance was held in a beautiful harmony.[13]

The next example, from the travelogue *Jāpān Yātrī* (1919), an account of Tagore's journey to Japan, records his joy in observing people:

First of all, I noticed the work of the Chinese labourers on the quay. They wore only blue pyjamas, the rest of their bodies bare. Spare and perfectly moulded there was not the slightest superfluity anywhere—their muscles kept rippling the beat of their work.... I never imagined that I could possibly extract so much enjoyment from the loading and unloading of cargo on a ship's pier. The work of perfect strength is very beautiful, at each stroke, it beautifies the body, and that body, too beautifies the work. ... In another steamer just opposite ours, all the Chinese sailors, after their work was over, were bathing in the afternoon with their clothes off, and it was a joy to watch them.[14]

Take one more example, a description of his fellow passengers during a flight from Calcutta to Tehran in 1932.

Up to this time we had not felt its motion very much, but suffered from the intolerable din of its propellers—there was no possibility of communication between passengers. My ears stuffed with cotton wool, I could only look about me. In the front row was a Dane, employed in a sugar-cane plantation in Manila, now going home. He had been busy following our route on a partly rolled-up map occasionally helping himself to bread and cheese, or chocolates. He had brought along with him a pile of newspapers which he perused one after another. There were also three wireless operators who taking turns, sat in their corners with the apparatus strapped to their ears, taking notes or writing their reports between intervals of eating and dozing. Together with the pilots these comprised our little community, snatched off the earth into isolation, pursuing a course through infinite solitude....[15]

The relaxed and intimate style—not totally lost in the translation—that makes the Bengali travelogues so lively and cheerful are absent in his addresses and lectures in English. Occasionally he enlivens his speeches with flashes of wit and humour, but generally his tone is serious, his style florid. In a perceptive

passage in *Jābhā Yātrīr Patra* (Letters from Java, 1929) Tagore writes:

At the moment of departure it occurs to me that beautiful as the island is, fine as are its people, nevertheless my mind would not care to build its nest here. From over the seas the call of India haunts me. Not merely because from infancy my communion with the universe has been through India, but because in its rivers and plains, in its atmosphere and its light, I have received intimation of an immensity that has captivated my mind into adoration forever. It is true that it causes me much suffering, the desolation that is everywhere in the lives of her people; yet, transcending it all, there is always with us the message of supreme liberation that has resounded in her skies from the beginning of time.[16]

This statement of his relationship with India and the universe is to a large extent relevant and appropriate to that of the two languages he used. His communion with the universe had been through India, more precisely through one Indian language. This language conferred upon him, because of historical reasons, a relative obscurity outside the area of its operation, but it also gave, which he realized as an artist, 'the message of supreme liberation'. The English language opened up a wider world but it was to play a specific role: it was a language of communication only, not a language of 'communion'.

IV

Not only in the *Sādhanā* lectures, which were sponsored by the Unitarians, but also in his subsequent lecture tours, Tagore played a specific role designed by others. Both *Sādhanā*, a reincarnation of the Bengali *Śāntiniketan* lectures, and *Personality*, a more structured exposition of his spiritual thought, became popular in the West as much for their idealistic content as for their conformity with the oriental wisdom perceived by the West. These two prose works reinforced the *Gitanjali* image, but marginalized other marked features of the English Tagore. It is necessary to remember that the prophet image which fitted Tagore so nicely was essentially a western construction—Tagore's own contribution to that notwithstanding—which did not care in the least to differentiate him from stereotypes. The most important thing that went totally unnoticed was Tagore's foregrounding of folk religion. His translations of Kabir and Jnanadas Bagheli had deeper connections with his understanding of religion which received no less support from the Bauls, the subalterns of Indian religious history, as it did from the sophisticated Upanisadic texts which sustained the Brahmo theology. Tagore was the first English-educated Indian to appropriate the Baul texts into his world-view. He did not consider the Baul thought either as contradictory to the Upaniṣadic doctrines or as a self-sufficient alternative to them. But he valorized its heretic character, its rejection of all institutional religions. This recognition of a folk world-view resistant to canonical texts and institutions, provided a fuller picture of Indian religious plurality, the coexistence of religious sects, distinctive by social stratification—brahmanical and non-brahmanical, elite and folk—as well.

Tagore refers to the songs which he heard

from wandering village singers . . . who have no images, temples, scriptures, or ceremonials, who declare in their songs the divinity of man, and express for him an

intense feeling of love. Coming from men who are unsophisticated, living a simple life in obscurity, it gives us a clue to the inner meaning of all religions. For it suggests that these religions are never about a God of cosmic force, but rather about the God of human personality.

Such a view of religion may be considered outrageous, if not blasphemous, by many. It projects a completely different position with respect to man's allegiance to rituals, texts, institutions, dogmas, causing unending woes to man in the past. Tagore's interpretation of religion was so radically different from the traditional view that his response to the atheism of communist Russia shocked many. He wrote, 'let the theologians of other countries condemn Soviet Russia all they want, but I cannot condemn her, and I do not. Atheism is much better than superstition in religion and the tyranny of the czar, which were like heavy loads of stone on the breast of Russians.'[17] Today it is more challenging to us, who are threatened by religious fanaticism and ethnic wars all over the world.

But it was not a question of religion alone: Tagore slowly got involved with problems arising out of what he called 'the wriggling tentacles of a cold-blooded utilitarianism', or 'the gulf between nature and human nature owing to the tradition of... race and time'. If Tagore had 'wanted to heal the wounds of world', as Rothenstein alleges, it was not because of his ambition to achieve a higher glory not due to a poet, but because of his deeper concerns of life which refused to keep life and art separate. This is strongly manifested in Tagore's deeper involvement with politics.

The mystic image of Tagore has been perpetuated so widely among his non-Indian readers in particular, that many of the essays included here will come as a shock and embarrassment because of their unabashed political associations. In a letter to Rothenstein, who obviously advised the poet to keep away from politics, Tagore wrote:

I have nothing to do directly with politics: I am not a Nationalist, moderate or immoderate in my political aspiration. But politics is not a mere abstraction. It has its personality and it does intrude into my life when I am human. It kills and maims individuals, it tells lies, it uses its sacred sword of justice for the purpose of massacre, it spreads misery broadcast over centuries of exploitation and I cannot say to myself, 'Poet, you have nothing to do with these facts for they belong to politics.' This politics assumes its fullest diabolical aspect when I find all its hideous acts of injustice find moral support from a whole nation only because it wants to enjoy in comfort and safety the golden fruits reaped from abject degradation of human races.[18]

This was written in 1920 soon after Tagore denounced his knighthood in protest against the massacre in Punjab, and when all his attempts to impress upon the British government and the British public the inhumanity of the crime, failed. This came as a sharp rejoinder to the polite advice to distance himself from politics, to keep the white robe of the mystic free from dirt. Tagore chose to address all the crises of Indian political life and to clearly articulate his anxiety. He was not a member of any political party and yet his involvement with the national movement was too deep to be ignored by the national leaders. At the same time his faith in an international order was so strong that he emerged as a most powerful figure symbolizing sanity and moral

authority in the world by the mid-twenties of the century. It appears so natural that Bertrand Russell used Tagore's words in the *Gitanjali*, 'Where the Mind is without Fear and the Head is Held High', as the motto of his *Philosophy of Pacifism* (1915).[19]

Often condemned as unpatriotic because of his uncompromising denouncement of nationalism, which he considered an instrument of political hegemony and an ideology to legitimize the oppression of one nation over the other, Tagore was also idolized by revolutionaries, many of whom were inspired by his words and music. Tagore crossed swords with the greatest Indian of his time and yet not for a moment did he have the slightest doubt about the nobility of his mind and ability of his leadership. The writings collected here are evidences of Tagore's response to the various demands of Indian politics and socio-religious life. They also indicate his growing involvement with the major issues of world politics. He witnessed two world wars and the rise of the fascists in Italy, in Spain and in Germany; he witnessed the rape of Africa by the white powers, the rise of an aggressive Japan and also the revolution in Soviet Russia. Each of these events moved him tremendously and to each of them he responded with courage and thought. In certain cases, he faltered and hesitated; he was trapped and tempted, as during his Italy visit—but always he addressed the problems and refused to escape on the precious plea of being an artist, not a politician. Neither his opposition to fascism nor his condemnation of nationalism was controlled by any other political ideology but by his basic faith in the unity of man and in a moral universe. When the 70-year-old poet wrote from Russia, 'had I not come [to Russia] my life's pilgrimage would have remained incomplete',[20] it was not a statement of a politician declaring his ideological commitment, it was the expression of his faith in man. He was concerned about the poverty in his country, the conditions of the farmers and workers: 'Who could be more astonished than an unfortunate Indian like myself to see how in these few years they have removed the mountain of ignorance and helplessness?' With this deep anxiety for the people of India, as well as for humanity at large, steeped in poverty and ignorance, he wrote, 'it would have been unpardonable not to see the light of the greatest sacrificial fire known in history'. And yet he was not a believer in the communist ideology: his faith in 'spiritual' man remained unshaken till the last moment of his life. He cherished freedom of thought as the highest ideal in social and political life. Howsoever great was his enthusiasm for the Russian experiment he did not overlook what he called its 'grave defects'. 'The defect' he detected was 'that they have turned their system of education into a mould, but humanity cast in a mould cannot endure.' The spiritual ideology in which he was rooted did not allow him to accept the attempts at marginalizing the individual. He wrote candidly:

> I do not believe that they have been able to draw the proper line of demarcation between the individual and society. In that respect they are not unlike the fascists. For this reason they are loth to admit any limit to the suppression of the individual in the name of collectivity. They forget that by enfeebling the individual, the collective being cannot be strengthened. If the individual is in shackles, society cannot be free. They have here the dictatorship of the strong man. The rule of the many by one may perchance good results for a time, but not for ever.[21]

The last sentence is a paraphrase of a Sanskrit verse which Tagore had quoted innumerable times in his lectures at home and abroad, asserting every time his faith and conviction in a moral universe, in the ultimate triumph of the innate goodness of man. And this conviction is the basis of his internationalism.

The corpus of Tagore's English prose writings collected here, beginning with the letter to the American lawyer Myron H. Phelps in 1909, and terminating with 'Crisis in Civilization' written in 1941, is part of a long discourse on the Indo-European encounter. It records minutely Indian intellectuals' different perceptions of the West and their understanding of the Indian civilization; it also reflects the different stages of the Indian response to western civilization: the initial faith and hope and their gradual erosion culminating in total disillusionment. But it also presents a narrative of faith in man and hope for the triumph of the individual. 'As I look around I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility', he wrote, and yet he thought it was a 'grievous sin' to lose faith in man. 'A day will come when unvanquished man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage.'

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Aldous Huxley, 'Reflections on Tagore', *Indian Literature*, Vol. IV, 1961, p. 128.
2 See Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis, *Kabir Sange Ūrupe*, Mitra and Ghosh, Calcutta, 1970, p. 257.
3 A few fragments of several interviews, however, are to be found in others' writings, for example, Welthy H. Fisher, wife of the Bishop of the Methodist Church in Calcutta, F. Bohn Fisher, writes in 'A Week-end with Tagore and Gandhi' (*Span*, September 1963, pp. 34–36—quoted in Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay's *Rabīndra Jībanī*, III, 3rd edn, 1991, p. 236) that Tagore condemned idolatry in very strong terms while Gandhi defended it. These are the words, we are informed, from Tagore: 'No ... if idols and idolatry, if beads and painted stones are not needed by us in this room, not righteous for us, then they are not righteous for any of our people, however lowly. I'd like to sweep up every idol of every kind, brass, wood, stone and alabaster, from every city and village—every temple and mahulla, and make one great heap from the whole country, and sweep them into the sea and so cleanse our stables.' Obviously, the context of this outburst was the effect of idolatry on the perpetuation of superstition particularly among the uneducated sections of the people. Gandhi's defence of idolatry is also understandable if viewed as a part of religiosity. He said, 'That painted piece of stone is the only tangible symbol of God our half-starved brother has ever had. How can we deny him the only link between himself and God.' Since such observations taken out of context can only distort the intentions of the speakers, I have decided not to include them.

While I was leafing through the numerous paper-clippings of various foreign newspapers preserved in the Rabindra Bhavan, I came across many reports of Tagore's views on different subjects as widely divergent as untouchability in India, colour prejudice, the role of women and contemporary cinema.
4 For bibliographical information see Gaur Chandra Saha, *Rabīndra Patrābalī Tathypañjī*, Deys Publishing, Calcutta, 1984. See also Bina Mukhopadhyay,

Ciṭhipatre Rabīndranāth, Navana, Calcutta, 1985, a useful exercise in classification of Tagore's Bengali letters.

5 Neither *Rāśiyar Ciṭhi* (Letters from Russia) nor *Yurop Prabāsīr Patra* (Letters from Europe) nor *Jābhā Yātrīr Patra* (Letters from Java) is included in the series of Tagore's letters published by Visva-Bharati.

6 Although meticulously edited, this particular work has been very harshly condemned by Saurindra Mitra in his closely argued polemical work *Khyāti-akhyātir Nepathye*, Ananda Publishers, Calcutta, 2nd edn, 1955, pp. 12–18.

7 *Rolland and Tagore* (Visva-Bharati, 1945) edited by Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani, contains several letters written by Rolland to Tagore—in English translation—but nothing by Tagore to Rolland. The editors wrote with regret: 'we have been able to include only the letters of Rolland to Tagore. The original of the letters written by Tagore to Rolland are, or should be, with the latter's heir. We can only hope that when normal communications are resumed after the war, we should be able to include in the second edition letters written to him by Rabindranath as well.' Unfortunately the book did not have a second edition.

Recently, Tagore's letters to Gandhi with useful notes by Sanat Kumar Bagchi have been published in *Rabīndra Bīkṣā* (No. 26). But unfortunately Gandhi's responses are not available there. Apart from a few letters by Tagore written to Nehru (*A Bunch of Letters*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958) or to Zenobia Jiménez, wife of the Spanish poet Juan Ramén Jiménez, which are now available in print, a large part of Tagore's correspondence lies with the recipients, or their heirs, themselves. The Tagore–Edward Thompson correspondences edited by Dr Uma Dasgupta are expected to appear soon. Several other scholars are also working on Tagore's correspondence. *Poets to a Poet* (Letters to Tagore from Robert Bridges, E. Rhys, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Moore, R.C. Trevelyan and Ezra Pound), edited by Bikash Chakrabarty, is in the press.

8 William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, Vol. I, Faber and Faber, London, 1932, Chapter XXXII, p. 283.

9 See Harold M. Hurwitz, 'Tagore in Urbana', *Indian Literature*, Vol. IV, 1961, pp. 27–34.

10 See Maitrayi Devi, *The Great Wanderer*, Grantham, 1961.

11 'Yātrār Pūrba Patra' (*Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*, Āṣāḍh, 1319, i.e. AD 1912) included in *Pather Sañcay*, Visva-Bharati, 1939.

12 'Asia's Response to the Call of the New Age' (*Modern Review*, October 1932), also to be found in Section II of this volume.

13 'England-er Pallīgrām o Pādrī', written in 1912, later collected in *Pather Sañcay* (1939). English translation by Amiya Chakravarti. See *Tagore Reader*, 1961, pp. 9–10.

14 *Jāpān Yātrī* (1919). English translation by Pramatha Chaudhuri and Indira Devi, 1961, p. 3.

15 Translated by Surendranath Tagore, quoted in Amiya Chakravarty, op. cit., pp. 11–12.

16 Translated by Indira Devi, quoted from Amiya Chakravarty, *Tagore Reader*, p. 9.

17 *Letters from Russia*, translated by Sasadhar Sinha, 1960, p. 60.

18 Letter dated 6 October 1920. See Lago, *Imperfect Encounter*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 277–78.

19 This is the paper Russell read at the Conference upon the Pacifist Philosophy of Life at Caxton Hall, London, on 8 and 9 July 1915. I am indebted to Professor R.K. Das Gupta for this piece of information.

20 *Rāśiyār Ciṭhi*, translated into English by Sasadhar Sinha under the title *Letters*

from Russia (Visva-Bharati, 1960). This is one of the most important works of Tagore, not so well known outside Bengal. The English translation of the book began to be serialized in *The Modern Review* from June 1934 but was almost immediately banned by the government. A question was raised in the House of Commons why the Government of Bengal, which did not take objection to the publication of Tagore's articles on Russia in Bengali, warned the editor of *The Modern Review* that 'such articles must not be published in future'. The Under-Secretary for India replied that the Bengali book 'attracted little public attention and consequently no notice of it was taken by government, but the translation into English of a particular chapter which was clearly calculated by distortion of the facts to bring the British administration in India into contempt and disrepute, and its publication in the forefront of a widely read English magazine put a wholly different complexion on the case (*The Times*, 13 November 1934). Yet another example of the irony of Tagore's bilingual career'.

The importance of the text, however, which has not diminished even today, lies in its incisive critique of a totalitarian state.

21 *Letters from Russia*, translated by Sinha, op. cit., p. 92. Also see Rajendra Verma, *Rabindranath Tagore, Prophet against Totalitarianism*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964.

Delhi SISIR KUMAR DAS

I

ESSAYS

Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore

The Religion of Man

Man

Letters to a Friend

Mahatmaji and the Depressed Humanity

East and West

Thoughts from
Rabindranath Tagore

PART I

1

LAST NIGHT I dreamt that I was the same boy that I had been before my mother died. She sat in a room in a garden-house on the bank of the Ganges. I carelessly passed by without paying attention to her, when all of a sudden it flashed through my mind with an unutterable longing that my mother was there. At once I stopped and went back to her and bowing low touched her feet with my head. She held my hand, looked into my face, and said: 'You have come!'

In this great world we carelessly pass by the room where Mother sits. Her storeroom is open when we want our food, our bed is ready when we must sleep. Only that touch and that voice are wanting. We are moving about, but never coming close to the personal presence, to be held by the hand and greeted: 'You have come!'

2

IN MY EARLY years, I did not know that my sight had become impaired. The first day when, by chance, I put on a pair of eyeglasses, I found that I had suddenly come nearer to everything. I felt I had gained the world twice as much as had been given to me the moment before.

There is such a thing as coming to the nearer presence of the world through the soul. It is like a real home-coming into this world. It is gaining the world more than can be measured—like gaining an instrument, not merely by having it, but by producing upon it music.

3

SPIRITUAL LIFE IS the emancipation of consciousness. Through it we find immediate response of soul everywhere. Before we attain this life, we see men through the medium of self-interest, prejudice or classification, because of the perpetual remoteness around us which we cannot cross over. When the veil is removed, we not only see the fleeting forms of the world, but come close to its eternal being, which is ineffable beauty.

Some seek for the evidence of spiritual truth in the outside world. In this quest one may stumble upon ghosts or some super-sensual phenomenon of Nature, but these do not lead us to spiritual truth, as new words in a dictionary do not give us literature.

4

TO-DAY IS THE special day of the yearly festival of our *ashram*, and we must make time to realize in the heart of this place the truth which is beauty. And for this we have lighted our lamps. In the morning the sun came out brightly; in the dusk the stars held up their lights. But these were not sufficient for us. Until we light our own little lamps, the world of lights in the sky is in vain, and unless

* The passages have been numbered in the present edition.

we make our own preparations, the great wealth of the world-preparations remains waiting like a lute for the finger-touch.

5

I NEED HAVE no anxiety about the world of Nature. The sun does not wait to be trimmed by me.

But from the early morning all my thoughts are occupied by this little world of myself. Its importance is owing to the fact that I have a world given to me which is mine. It is great because I have the power to make it worthy of its relationship with me; it is great because by its help I can offer my own hospitality to the God of all the world.

6

IN OUR EVERYDAY world we live in poverty; our resources have to be husbanded with care; our strength becomes exhausted, and we come to our God as beggars for our joy of life. On festival days, we display our wealth and say to Him that we are even as He is; and we are not afraid to spend. This is the day when we bring to Him our own gift of joy. For we truly meet God, when we come to Him with our offerings and not with our wants.

7

LIFE'S HIGHEST opportunity is to be able to offer hospitality to our God. We live in God's world and forget Him, for the blind acceptance which is one-sided never finds its truth. It is a desert which receives rain but never offers fruit in return, and its receiving has no meaning. God's world is given to us, and when we offer our world to God, then the gift is realized.

8

WHEN I HAD thrust the great world unnoticed behind the bars of my office habit, I developed in me the belief that I was indispensable. Of the many means by which Nature exacts work from man, this pride is one of the most efficient. Those who work for money, work only to the extent of their wages, up to a definite point, beyond which they would count it a loss to work. But those whose pride impels them to work, they have no rest; even over-time work is not felt as a loss by them.

So busy used I to be under the belief that I was indispensable, that I hardly dared to wink. My doctor now and again would warn me, saying: 'Stop, take it easy.' But I would reply: 'How will things go on if I stop?' Just then my health failed me, the wheels of my car broke down and it came to a stop beneath this window. From here I looked out upon the limitless space. There I saw whirling the numberless flashing wheels of the triumphal chariot of time,—no dust raised, no din, not even a scratch left on the roadway. On a sudden I came to myself. I clearly perceived that things could get along without me. There was no sign that those wheels would stop, or drag the least bit, for lack of anyone in particular.

But is this to be admitted so easily as all that? Even if I admit it in words, my mind refuses assent. If it be really quite the same whether I go or stay, how then did my pride of self find a place in the universe, even for a moment? On what could it have taken its stand? Amidst all the plentifulness with which space and time are teeming, it was nevertheless not possible to leave out this self of mine. The fact that I am indispensable is proved by the fact that *I am.*

9

EGOISM IS THE price paid for the fact of existence. So long as I realize this price within me, so long do I steadfastly bear all the pains and penalties of keeping myself in existence. That is why the Buddhists have it, that to destroy egoism is to cut at the root of existence: for without the pride of self it ceases to be worthwhile to exist.

However that may be, this price has been furnished from some fund or other,—in other words, it matters somewhere that I should be, and the price paid is the measure of how much it matters. The whole universe—every molecule and atom of it—is assisting this desire that I should be. And it is the glory of this desire which is manifest in my pride of self. By virtue of this glory this infinitesimal 'I' is not lower than any other thing in this universe, in measure or value.

10

MAN HAS VIEWED the desire in him to *be* in two different ways. Some have held it to be an impulse of Creative Power, some a joyous self-expression of Creative Love. And man sets before himself different goals as the object of his life according as he views the fact of his *being* as the revealment of Power or of Love.

The value which our entity receives from Power is quite different in its aspect from that which it receives from Love. The direction in which we are impelled by our pride, in the field of Power, is the opposite of that given by our pride, in the field of Love.

11

POWER CAN BE measured. Its volume, its weight, its momentum can all be brought within the purview of mathematics. So it is the endeavour of those who hold Power to be supreme, to increase in bulk. They would repeatedly multiply numbers,—the number of men, the number of coins, the number of appliances. When they strive for success they sacrifice others' wealth, others' rights, others' lives; for sacrifice is the essence of the cult of Power; and the earth is running red with the blood of that sacrifice.

The distinctive feature of materialism is the measurability of its outward expression, which is the same thing as the finiteness of its boundaries. And the disputes, civil and criminal, which have raged in the history of man, have mostly been over these same boundaries. To increase one's own bounds one has necessarily to encroach upon those of others. So, because the pride of Power is the pride of quantity, the most powerful telescope, when pointed in the direction of Power, fails to reveal the shore of peace across the sea of blood.

12

BUT WHEN ENGAGED in adding up the quantities of these forces and facts of Power, we do not find them to be an ever-increasing series. In our pursuit of the principle of accumulation we are all of a sudden held up by stumbling upon the principle of check which bars the way. We discover that there is not only onward motion, but there are also pauses. And we repeatedly find in history that whenever the blindness of Power has tried to overrule this rule of rhythm, it has committed suicide. And that is why man still remembers the story of the toppling over the Tower of Babel.

So we see that the principle of Power, of which the outward expression is bulk, is neither the final nor the supreme Truth. It has to stop itself to keep time with the rhythm of the universe. Restraint is the gateway of the Good. The value of the Good is not measured in terms of dimension or multitude. He who has known it within himself feels no shame in rags and tatters. He rolls his crown in the dust and marches out on the open road.

13

WHEN FROM THE principle of Power we arrive at the principle of Beauty, we at once understand that, all this while, we had been offering incense at the wrong shrine; that Power grows bloated on the blood of its victims only to perish of surfeit; that try as we may by adding to armies and armaments, by increasing the number and variety of naval craft, by heaping up our share of the loot of war, arithmetic will never serve to make true that which is untrue; that at the end we shall die crushed under the weight of our multiplication of things.

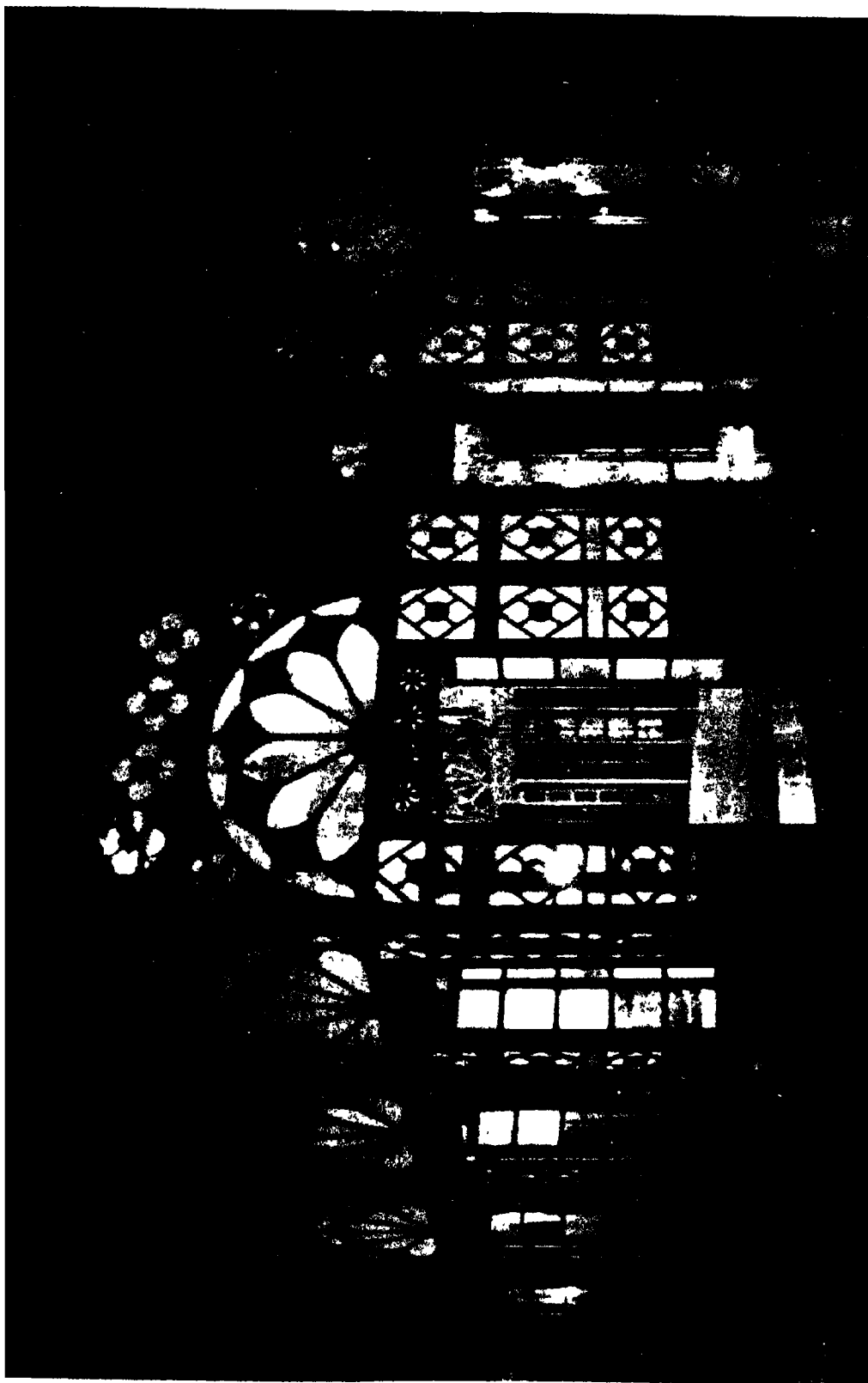
When the *Rishi* Yajnavalkya, on the eve of his departure, offered to leave his wife Maitreyi well-established upon an enumeration of what he had gathered together during his life, she exclaimed:

> What am I to do with these, which are not of the immortal spirit?

Of what avail is it to add and add and add? By going on increasing the volume or pitch of sound we can get nothing but a shriek. We can gain music only by restraining the sound and giving it the melody of the rhythm of perfection.

Man grows gigantic by the appropriation of everything for himself: he attains harmony by giving himself up. In this harmony is peace,—never the outcome of external organization or of coalition between power and power,—the peace which rests on truth and consists in curbing of greed, in the forgiveness of sympathy.

14

THE QUESTION IS: 'In which Truth is my entity to realize its fullest value,—in Power or in Love?' If we accept Power as that Truth we must also recognize conflict as inevitable and eternal. According to many European writers the Religion of Peace and Love is but a precarious coat of armour within which the weak seek shelter, but for which the laws of Nature have but scant respect. That

which the timid preachers of religion anathematise as unrighteousness,—that alone is the sure road which leads man to success.

The opposite school do not wholly deny this. They admit the premises but they say:

> *Adharmēnaidhatē tābat, tato bhadrāni pashyati, tatah sapatnān jayati,—samūlastu vinashyati.*

> In unrighteousness they prosper, in it they find their good, through it they defeat their enemies,—but they perish at the root.

15

It is still dark. The day is about to dawn. The stall-keepers, who gathered for the festival fair, have spent the winter night singing round the lighted fires. Now they are preparing to disperse. Their noise, unlike the birds' notes, disturbs the morning peace.

For man stands at the parting of the ways. His strings have to be tuned for a deeper and a more complex music than those of Nature. Man has his mind which reasons, and his will which seeks its own path. These have not yet found their full harmony with their surroundings. Therefore they are apt to break out in the ugliness of discord.

But in this very ugliness lies the great hope of the future. For these discords are not mere facts which we are compelled to acknowledge; they are ugly facts. This itself asserts every moment that they are not what they should be; they are incomplete, and they are hopeful because they are painful.

16

We are like a stray line of a poem, which ever feels that it rhymes with another line and must find it, or miss its own fulfilment. This quest of the unattained is the great impulse in man which brings forth all his best creations. Man seems deeply to be aware of a separation at the root of his being, he cries to be led across it to a union; and somehow he knows that it is love which can lead him to a love which is final.

17

I have a relationship with the world which is deeply personal. It is not of mere knowledge and use. All our relationships with facts have an infinite medium which is Law, *satyam*; all our relationship with truth has an infinite medium which is Reason, *jnānam*; all our personal relationship has an infinite medium which is Love, *ānandam*.

We are not mere facts in this world, like pieces of stone; we are persons. And therefore we cannot be content with drifting along the stream of circumstances. We have a central ideal of love with which to harmonize our existence, we have to manifest a truth in our life, which is the perfect relationship with the Eternal Person.

18

LAST NIGHT when the north wind was keen, like a sharp blade of steel, the stall-keepers improvized some kind of shelter with twigs and leaves. With all its flimsiness it was the most important necessity for them, for the time. But this morning, before it is light, we hear them shouting for their bullocks and dragging out from underneath the trees their creaking carts. It is urgently important for them now to leave their shelter.

'I want' has its constant counterweight—'I do not want'. Otherwise the monster necessity, with its immovable weight, would crush all existence. For the moment we may sigh at the fact that nothing remains for long, but we are saved from permanent despair at the calamity that nothing moves at all. Things remain and things move—between these two contrary currents we have found our dwelling-place and freedom.

19

THE HORSE harnessed to a carriage is only a part of it, the master is he who drives it unattached. We are enjoined to work with vigour and yet retain our detachment of mind. For our deeds must express our freedom above all, otherwise we become like wheels revolving because compelled. There is a harmony between doing and not doing, between gaining and renouncing, which we must attain.

Our daily flow of prayer carries our self into the supreme Self, it makes us feel the reality of that fullness which we gain by utterly giving ourselves up, makes our consciousness expand in a large world of peace, where movements are beauty and all relations are truths because of their inner freedom, which is disinterestedness.

20

OUR WILL attains its perfection when it is one with love, for only love is true freedom. This freedom is not in the negation of restraint. It spontaneously accepts bondage, because bondage does not bind it, but only measures its truth. Non-slavery is in the cessation of service, but freedom is in service itself.

A village poet of Bengal says:

In love the end is neither pain nor pleasure, but love only.
Love gives freedom while it binds, for love is what unites.

21

LOVE IS NOT a mere impulse, it must contain truth, which is law. It accepts limitations from truth because of its own inner wealth. The child willingly exercises restraint to correct its bodily balance, because it has true pleasure in the freedom of its movements; and love also counts no cost as too great to realize its truth. Poetry is much more strict in its form of expression than prose, because poetry has the freedom of joy in its origin and end. Our love of God is accurately careful of its responsibilities. It is austere in its probity and it must

have intellect for its ally. Since what it deals with is immense in value, it has to be cautious about the purity of its coins. Therefore, when our soul cries for the gift of immortality, its first prayer is—'Lead me from the unreal to Truth.'

22

THE FATHER IS working in His world, but the Beloved is lying asleep in our heart, in the depth of its darkness. He will wake only when our own love wakes. It may sound paradoxical to say that we are unconscious of our own love, as we are unconscious of the fact that the earth is carrying us round the sun. But the truth is that all parts of our nature are not fully illuminated, and in most cases we have the immediate knowledge of ourselves only on the surface where our mind is occupied with the temporary needs and ferments of our life.

23

TO WAKE UP in love is not to wake up in a world of sweetness, but in the world of heroic endeavours where life wins its eternity through death, and joy its worth in suffering. As the most positive affirmation of truth is in love, it must realize itself through all that threatens us with deprivation. Poverty is afraid of the smallest loss, and wealth is daring in its expenditure. Love is the wealth of soul and therefore it reveals itself in utmost bravery and fortitude. And because it finds its resource in itself it begs not praise from men and no punishment can reach it from outside.

24

THE WORLD OF things in which we live misses its equilibrium when its communication with the world of love is lost. Then we have to pay with our soul for objects which are immensely cheap. And this can only happen when the prison walls of things threaten us with being final in themselves. Then it gives rise to terrible fights, jealousies and coercions, to a scramble for space and opportunities, for these are limited. We become painfully aware of the evil of this and try all measures of adjustment within the narrow bounds of a mutilated truth. This leads to failures. Only he helps us who proves by his life that we have a soul whose dwelling is in the kingdom of love, and things lose the tyranny of fictitious price when we come to our spiritual freedom.

25

IT IS HARD for us to free ourselves from the grip of our acquisitions. For the pull of their gravitation is towards the centre of our self. The force of perfect love acts towards the contrary direction. And this is why love gives us freedom from the weight of things. Therefore our days of joy are our days of expenditure. It is not the lightness of pressure in the outside world which we need in order to be free, but love which has the power to bear the world's weight, not only with ease, but with joy.

26

ONLY BECAUSE WE have closed our path to the inner world of freedom, has the outer world become terrible in this exactions. It is slavery to continue to live in a sphere where things are, yet their meaning is obstructed. It has become possible for men to say that existence is evil only because, in our blindness, we have missed something in which our existence has its truth. If a bird tries to soar in the sky with only one of its wings, it is offended with the wind for buffeting it down to the dust.

27

COMING TO THE theatre of life we foolishly sit with our back to the stage. We see the gilded pillars and decorations, we watch the coming and going of the crowd; and when the light is put out at the end, we ask ourselves in bewilderment, what is the meaning of it all? If we paid attention to the inner stage, we could witness the eternal love-drama of the soul and be assured that it has pauses, but no end, and that the gorgeous world-preparations are not a magnificent delirium of things.

28

WE CRITICISE Nature from outside when we separate it in our mind from human nature, and blame it for being devoid of pity and justice. Let the wick burn with indignation at the want of light in the rest of the candle, but the truth is that the wick represents the whole candle in its illumination. Obstacles are necessary companions to expression, and we know that the positive element in language is not in its obstructiveness. Exclusively viewed from the side of the obstacle, Nature appears as inimical to the idea of morality. But if that were absolutely true, moral life could never come to exist. Life, moral or physical, is not a completed fact, but is a continual process, depending for its movement upon two contrary forces, the force of resistance and that of expression. Dividing these forces into two mutually opposing principles does not help us, for the truth dwells not in the opposition but in its continual reconciliation.

29

GOOD TASTE WHICH is needful for the true understanding of a poem, comes from the vision of unity seen in the light of imagination. Faith has the similar function in our acceptance of life. It is a spiritual organ of sight which enables us instinctively to realize the vision of wholeness when in fact we only see the parts. Sceptics may scoff at this vision as an hallucination, they may select and arrange facts in such a manner as to disprove it, and yet faith never doubts its own direct apprehension of the inner truth which binds, which builds, which heals, which leads to an ideal of fullness. Faith is this spontaneous response in our being to the voice of the all-pervading Yes, and therefore it is the greatest of all creative forces in human life. It is not merely a passive acknowledgement of truth, it is an ever active effort for attaining harmony with that peace which is in the rhythm of truth in creation, goodness which is in the rhythm of combi-

nation in society, and unity of love which is in the rhythm of self-realization in soul. The mere fact of innumerable breaks in such a rhythm no more proves its unreality to a man gifted with faith than the prevalent fact of harsh notes and noises disproves the truth of music to a musician. It only calls him to a strenuous endeavour to mend the break and establish harmony with truth.

30

THE DAY BREAKS in the east, like a bud bursting its sheath to come out in flower. But if this fact belonged only to the outside world of events, how could we ever find our entrance into it? It is a sunrise in the sky of our consciousness, it is a new creation, fresh in bloom, in our life.

Open your eyes and see. Feel this world as a living flute might feel the breath of music passing through it, feel the meeting of creative joy in the depth of your consciousness. Meet this morning light in the majesty of your existence, where it is one with you. But if you sit with your face turned away, you build a separating barrier in the undivided sphere of creation, where events and the creative consciousness meet.

31

DARKNESS IS THAT which isolates our consciousness within our own self. It hides the great truth of our unity with the world, giving rise to doubt and contention. Groping in the dark, we stumble against objects to which we cling, believing them to be the only things we have. When light comes we slacken our hold, finding them to be mere parts of the all to which we are related. This is freedom—freedom from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things which impart fierce intensity to our sense of possession. Our God is that freedom, for He is Light, and in that light we find out truth, which is our perfect relationship with all.

32

FEAR ASSUMES unlimited dimensions in the dark, because it is the shadow of the self which has lost its foothold in the all; the self which is a doubter, an unbeliever, which puts its emphasis upon negation, exaggerating detached facts into fearful distortions. In the light we find the harmony of things and know that our world is great and therefore we are great; we know that, with more and more extensive realization of truth, conflicts will vanish; for existence itself is harmony.

33

IN NATURE WE find the presence of law in truth, and the presence of joy in beauty. It is urgently necessary for us to know truth, but we are free to ignore the presence of joy. It is not safe for our life to forget that it becomes light in the morning; but we can safely forget that morning is beautiful, and yet live.

In this realm of truth we are bound, in the realm of beauty we are free. We must pay our homage to God where He rules; but we may laugh at Him

where He loves. He keeps us bound where He binds Himself, He gives us freedom where He is infinite. The great power of beauty is in its modesty. It makes way for the least of us, it waits in silence. It must have our all or nothing, therefore it never asks. It suffers meekly when it is refused, but it has its eternity.

34

AN ACQUAINTANCE of mine has suddenly died and once again I come to know death, the tritest of all truisms in this world.

The moralist teaches us to know the world as unreal through the contemplation of death. But to make renunciation easy by calling the world names is neither true nor brave. For that renunciation is no renunciation at all in which things have lost their value.

On the contrary, the world is so true, that death's wheel leaves no mark upon it. The untruth is in the belief that this self of ours for its own permanent use can rob this world of even a particle of its things. Death has its concern only with our self and not with this world. The world never loses an atom, it is our self which suffers.

35

THERE ARE MEN whose idea of life is static, who long for its continuation after death only because of their wish for permanence and not perfection; they love to imagine that the things to which they are accustomed will persist for ever. They completely identify themselves in their minds with their fixed surroundings and with whatever they have gathered, and to have to leave these is death for them. They forget that the true meaning of living is outliving, it is ever growing out of itself. The fruit clings to its stem, its skin clings to the pulp and the pulp to the seed so long as the fruit is immature, so long as it is not ready for its course of further life. Its outer covering and its inner core are not yet differentiated and it only proves its life by its strength of tenacity. But when the seed is ripe its hold upon its surroundings is loosened, its pulp attains fragrance, sweetness, and detachment, and is dedicated to all who need it. Birds peck at it and it is not hurt, the storm plucks it and flings it to the dust and it is not destroyed. It proves its immortality by its renunciation.

36

IN HINDU SCRIPTURES this world is considered to be an egg. If that be true, then this egg must have for its content a living being whose fulfilment is to break through its shell into a freer existence.

While our world feeds us, gives us shelter, it encloses us all around. The limitedness of our narrow sensibility and range of thought build the shell of our world egg, within which our consciousness is confined. If we could widen its boundaries even by a small fraction, if some of the invisible rays could come within our sphere of perception, if a few more of the dance rhythms of

creation could find response in some added strings of our senses, then the whole aspect of our world would be completely changed.

To come out of the bounds of our sensibility and mental vision into a wider freedom is the meaning of our immortality. Can we imagine in our present stage of confinement what that sphere of freedom is like? From the data of all the facts within the shell can a chick ever form the idea of the world into which it is to be born?

37

THE PASSIVITY WHICH is the predominant fact of the shell life is secretly contradicted by the rudimentary wings. Likewise in the confinement of our present state, in spite of the fact that a great part of our life is passively obedient to circumstances, there struggles in us our aspiration for freedom against impediments that appear to be ultimate. This is our spiritual pair of wings which have their significance in a full opportunity to soar. Had immortality only meant an endless persistence of our shell itself, then we should admit that these impotent wings were cursed by an evil power with an eternity of hindrance. But this we cannot admit. Man has ever talked of emancipation from what is present, from what seems final. While the spirit of life in him seeks continuance, the spirit of immortality seeks emancipation.

38

THE LIFE OF the seed within the fruit is absolutely different from its life of growth as a tree. The life which is bound on all sides within the environment of our self, within the limited range of our senses, must be so fundamentally different from the life of an emancipated soul that it is impossible to imagine the latter while we are immured in the sheath of self. And therefore in our desire for eternal life we pray for an eternity of our habit and comfort, forgetting that immortality is in repeatedly transcending the definite forms of life in order to pursue the infinite truth of life. Those who think that life's true meaning is in the persistence of its particular forms which are familiar to us are like misers, who have not the power to know that the meaning of money can only be found by spending it, by changing the symbol into truth.

39

ALL OUR DESIRE are but focussing our will to a limited range of experience. These become jealously tenacious and combative when we fail to imagine that our experience will widen. In our childhood we wished for an unbounded continuity in our enjoyment of a particular food or game and we refused to believe in the worth of a mature age which had different interests altogether. Those who build their vision of a life after death upon the foundation of desires belonging to the present life merely show their want of faith in Eternal life. They cling to what they have because they cannot believe that their love for the present is only an indication that this love will persist through their growth, stimulating it, and not that it will retard their growth altogether.

40

THE WORLD OF sleep is fundamental,—it is the world of the mother's womb. It is the world where the grass and the trees live and find their beauty of reposefulness. Our consciousness has freed itself from its embrace, asserting its independence. It is the freedom of the fountain which must come over and over again to its origin to renew its play. The whole depth and spread of the still water finds its own play in the play of this little fountain. In like manner, it is in our own consciousness that the universe knows itself. Therefore this consciousness has to be great in order to be true. Our consciousness is the music of the world, its dance, its poem. It has its pauses in the bosom of the original sleep, to be fed with immortality at her breast.

41

IN MAN'S NATURE there is a division between the fleeting and the permanent, which the animals have not, because they live on the surface of life. Therefore they are saved from the danger of trying to give permanence to things which have not that quality in themselves. Only because man has to a great extent a preservative power in his inner world, does he try in his greed to keep his appetites ever fresh, steeping them in the elixir of imagination. These appetites are of outer nature, and for the animals they quit the stage when they have played their parts. But when we try to hoard them in our inner life we wrongly put upon them the seal of the infinite. Thus our land of immortality is every day being invaded by the retinue to death, and the servants who ought to be dismissed with their wages paid, are enshrined in our sanctuary.

PART II

42

WEALTH IS THE symbol of power. Therefore wealth must move and flow in order to be perfect. For power is active, it is movement. But mere movement is superficial. It must be a growth and therefore continual gaining. This gain is something which not merely moves, but remains.

The highest harmony of movement and rest is in the spiritual life, whose essence is love. Love of God, nay, love in all forms, is the reaching of the goal and yet never coming to a stop. Power, when it reaches its end, stops and grows careful of its hoarding. Love, when it reaches its end, reaches endlessness and therefore is not afraid of spending its all.

43

BEING BY NATURE social, some portion of our energies we must employ to keep up the flow of sociality. But its field and action are on the surface. The ripples of gregariousness are not the deep currents of human love. The men who have strong social instincts are not necessarily lovers of men.

The men who are spendthrifts very often lack true generosity. In most

cases they cannot give, but can only spend. And also like them the social men can spend themselves, but not give themselves. This reckless spending creates a vacuum which we fill up with the debris of activities, whose object is to bury time.

44

BUT WE CANNOT afford to fritter away our solitude where lies the throne of the infinite. We cannot truly live for one another if we never claim the freedom to live alone, if our social duties consist in helping one another to forget that we have souls. To exhaust ourselves completely in mere efforts to give company to each other, is to cheat the world of our best, the best which is the product of the amplitude of our inner atmosphere of leisure. Society poisons the air it breathes, where it hems in the individual with a revolving crowd of distractions.

45

IN OUR COUNTRY it is accounted the greatest calamity to have one's courtyard brought under the plough. Because, in the courtyard, man has made his very own the immense wealth called space. Space is not a rare commodity outside, but one does not *get* it till he can bring it inside and make it his own. The space of the courtyard, man has made part of his home. Here the light of the sun is revealed as his own light, and here his baby claps his little hands to call to the moon. So if the courtyard be not kept open, but be used for sowing crops, then is the nest destroyed in which the outside Universe can come and dwell as man's own universe.

46

THE DIFFERENCE between a really rich man and a poor man is, that the former can afford vast open spaces in his home. The furniture with which a rich man encumbers his house may be valuable, but the space with which he makes his courtyard wide, his garden extensive, is of infinitely greater value. The business place of the merchant is crowded with his stock,—there he has not the means keeping spaces vacant, there he is miserly, and millionaire though he be, there he is poor. But in his home that same merchant flouts mere utility by the length and breadth and height of his room—to say nothing of the expanse of his garden—and gives to space the place of honour. It is here that the merchant is rich.

Not only unoccupied space, but unoccupied time, also, is of the highest value. The rich man, out of his abundance, can purchase leisure. It is in fact a test of his riches, this power to keep fallow wide stretches of time, which want cannot compel him to plough up.

There is yet another place where an open expanse is the most valuable of all,—and that is in the mind. Thoughts which must be thought, from which there is no escape, are but worries. The thoughts of the poor and the miserable cling to their minds as the ivy to a ruined temple.

Pain closes up all openings of the mind. Health may be defined as the state in which the physical consciousness lies fallow, like an open health. Let there be but a touch of gout in the remotest toe, and the whole of consciousness is filled with pain, leaving not a corner empty.

Just as one cannot live grandly without unoccupied spaces, so the mind cannot think grandly without unoccupied leisure,—otherwise for it truth becomes petty. And like dim light, petty truth distorts vision, encourages fear, and keeps narrow the field of communion between man and man.

47

IN SOCIETY, we find our places according to a certain conventional price set upon us, like toys arranged in the shop windows according to their value. This makes us forget that we are not for sale, that the social man is not the whole man.

I have known a fisherman, singing while fishing all day in the Ganges, who was pointed out to me by my boatman with awe as man possessed by God. He is out of reach of the fluctuation of market prices, for he has found out the infinite value of the soul, which the monarchs of the world have not. In history there were men who are still recognized by their eternal worth; but this recognition is not the only proof of their value. For immortality is not in its outer manifestation, and dark rays are rays all the same, though we do not see them. The figure of this fisherman comes to my mind when I think that their number is not small who with their lives sing the epic of the freedom of soul, but will never be known in history.

48

OUR ASPIRATION becomes easy when through us our community aspires. Money-making is pursued by most men, not merely because money is useful, but rather because it is desired by others. The savages' lust for head-hunting becomes irresistible when it is prevalent in the community. When the majority wishes through us, we are ready to sacrifice truth to its claims.

Doubts assail us and strength fails in our aspiration for spiritual life chiefly because it is not the aspiration of the surrounding crowd. Therefore our wish for the highest has to be so immensely true, so that it can sustain itself in all circumstances against the constant pressure of the crowd's wish. We need all the succour of the eternal to fight against the combined antagonism of the congregated moments.

49

OUR THOUGHTS naturally move in their surrounding element of man's mind, like birds in the air. This sky of mind is perpetually troubled by contrary wind-currents, by doubts and denials, by levity and pride; it is obscured by the dust and smoke of the busy world. Our spiritual wings require spontaneity of speed, grace of perfect movement; but when they are constantly buffeted by noisy gusts from all sides it makes us too conscious of our limitations, and consequently

that self-abandonment becomes difficult which is necessary for our communion with the infinite. And yet the task has to be done and the most difficult path taken for the highest attainment of life. The great teachers have ever won that infinity of solitude, needed for soul's meeting with her God, through the crowd and for the crowd themselves. In the lives of these men we witness the proof of our own limitless power, and the faith that we thus gain gives freedom to our aspiration in the face of adversity.

50

SOME PART OF the earth's water becomes rarefied and ascends to the skies. With the movement and the music it acquires in those pure heights it then showers down, back to the water of the earth, making it wholesome and fresh. Similarly, part of the mind of humanity rises up out of the world and flies skywards; but this sky-soaring mind attains completeness only when it has returned, to mingle with the earth-bound mind. This is the ventilation of religion, the circulation of man's ideals between heaven and earth.

51

THERE ARE THE rain of mud, the rain of blood, and such-like dire phenomena of which we hear tell. These happen when the purity of the atmosphere is sullied and the air is burdened with dirt. Then it is not the song of the sky which descends in purifying showers, but just the earth's own sins which fall back on it. Then our religion itself grows muddy, the collective egoism of the people assumes pious names, and we boast of our God taking the lead in our adventures of self-seeking, in our campaign of hatred.

52

TO-DAY ON THE sin-laden dust of the earth pours tainted rain from the sky. Our long wait for the cleansing bath in pure water from on high has been repeatedly doomed to disappointment; the mud is soiling our minds, and marks of blood are also showing. How long can we keep on wiping this away? Even the pure silence of the empyrean is powerless to clarify the discordant notes of the prayer for peace which is rising from a blood-stained world.

Peace? Who can truly pray for Peace? Only they who are ready to renounce.

Atha dheerā amrtatvam viditva
Dhruvam adhruvēshviha na prārthayantē.

Men of tranquil mind, being sure of Immortal Truth, never seek the eternal in things of the moment.

53

OUR GREATEST MEN have shown immense respect for mankind in their expectations. We come to believe in ourselves because of what is asked of us. Practical men base their arrangements upon their estimates of man's

limitations. Therefore the great creations of history, the creations that have their foundation upon the faith in the infinite in man, have not their origin in the common sense of practical men. When Buddha said to men: 'Spread your thoughts of love beyond limits', when Christ said: 'Love your enemies', their words transcended the average standard of ideals belonging to the ordinary world. But they ever remind us that our true life is not the life of the ordinary world, and we have a fund of resources in us which is inexhaustible. It is not for us to despair, because the highest hope for mankind has been uttered by the great words of great men.

54

It is an important duty for man so to bear himself that he may not fail to be recognized as man,—not only in his own interest, but because of his responsibilities to others. The man who belittles himself lowers not only his own value but that of all mankind. Man knows himself as great where he sees great men,—and the truer such vision of greatness becomes, the easier it becomes to be great.

55

To fledgling birds flight in the sky may appear incredible. They may with apparent reason measure the highest limit of their possibilities by the limited standard of their nests. But, in the meanwhile, they find that their food is not grown inside those nests, it is brought to them across the measureless blue. There is a silent voice that speaks to them, that they are more than what they are, and that they must not laugh at the message of soaring wings and glad songs of freedom.

56

The more we feel afraid of pain, the more we build all kinds of hiding-places in which to hide ourselves from our own truth. Our wealth and honour are barricades that keep us at arm's length from the touch of our own true selves. Thus we become more familiar with that which we have, than that which we are. Our sufferings seek us out through our protections; they take away our artificial props and set us face to face with our naked loneliness.

This stripping bare of our deeper selves is not only necessary for self-exploration and the discovery of our innermost resources, but it is also needed for our purification. For beneath our safe cover of prosperity and comfort, dirt and dead matter gather every day waiting to be cleared by the rude rubbing of pain.

57

The old is prudent but is not wise. Wisdom is that freshness of mind which enables one to realize that truth is not hoarded in caskets of maxims, it is free and living. Great sufferings lead us to wisdom because these are the birth-throes through which our mind is freed from its habit-environment, and

comes naked into the arms of reality. Wisdom has the character of the child perfected through knowledge and feeling.

58

MORNING HAS ITS birds' songs, and life's daybreak has the music of the child. At every home comes to us this refrain of life with its pure notes of beauty. The bloom constantly is brushed off the world of man by the friction of its dirt, it is roughened and begrimed by the callous touch of age; yet there flows unobstructed the daily renewal of humanity in its ceaseless rebirths. The eternal repeats its call at man's gate in every child, and the morning's message keeps its melody unimpaired.

It rouses response to-day in my heart, the life's awakening call that comes from the children's shouts and songs round me, and I feel that creation finds its own true voice in them, the creation which keeps nestled in its heart the spirit of the child.

59

THIS SYMPHONY made of the morning light and children's mirth does not speak to me of pure joy. For in my heart it mingles with another strain which tempers its sparkle with a shade of sadness. It is a cry of unattained harmony, unfulfilled hope. The simple notes of ideal completeness dash themselves against life's complexities, rugged with flaws and fractures, and a sob of anguish spreads over our thoughts. For pain finds its own music in the notes that joy brings to it from heaven, as the pebbles find theirs from the flow of the laughing stream.

60

EXISTENCE IS THE play of the fountain of immortality. Wash your soul with its water, you who are old, and feel that you are of the same age with the flower that has blossomed this morning and with this light which carries fresh in its countenance the first smile of creation. This is freedom, freedom from the mist which for the time being masks our spirit with the semblance of blurred age, hiding from us the truth that we are the children of the immortal. Could the child bring such a joy to the heart of man if age and death were true? Does not that joy come from a direct recognition of the truth of deathless life, of endless growth and ever-renewed hope of perfection?

61

TO ALLEVIATE PAIN, to try to remove its causes, are worthy of man. All the same, we must know that a great part of our sufferings has to be ascribed to the beginning of our entrance into a new plane of existence to which our vital nature has not been completely adapted nor our mind thoroughly accustomed. From a narrow perfection of animality man has arrived in the imperfectness of spiritual life, where the civil war between the forces of our primitive past and those belonging to our future has robbed us of peace. Not having reached its normal stage, humanity is enveloped in the incandescent vapour of suffering.

62

MAN'S GREATNESS IS like the morning sun, its horizon is far before us. Man truly lives in the life that is beyond him; he toils for the unknown master, he stores for the unborn, he leaves the best harvest of his life for reapers who have not yet come; the time which is yet to be is truer to him than the time which is. Man offers himself as a sacrifice for all that lies in the future; the motive power which guides the course of his growth is expectation. All this shows that man is not yet born, his history is the history of birth-throes. Our greatest men bring in their life the message of man's future birth; for they dwell in the time to come, making it ready for ourselves. They reveal to us a life whose glory is not in the absence of suffering, but in the fact that its sufferings have been made creative, transmuted into the stuff of life itself. It is like the tree which garners the sun's heat and light in its fibre and breaks out in beauty of fruitfulness. By extinguishing the fire of pain man may find his comfort, his period of slumber, which is the period of stagnant time, an imprisoned present; but by mastering this fire he lights his lamp of wisdom which gives illumination to the endless future.

63

THERE ARE SUFFERINGS about which the question comes to our mind whether we deserve them. We must frankly acknowledge that explanations are not offered to us. So it does not help us in the least to complain; let us rather be worthy of the challenge thrown to us by them. That we have been wounded is a fact which can be ignored, but that we have been brave is a truth of the highest importance. For the former belongs to the outer world of cause and effect, while the latter belongs to the world of spirit.

64

WE MUST KNOW that to be provided with an exact apportionment of what we deserve and need, is like travelling in a world whose flatness is ideally perfect, and therefore where the fluid forces of Nature are held in suspense. We require ups and downs, however unpleasant they may be, in our life's geography, in order to make our thoughts and energies fluently active. Our life's journey is a journey in an unknown country, where hills and hollows come in our way unawares, keeping our minds ever active in dealing with them. They do not come according to our deserts, but our deserts are judged according to our treatment of them.

65

WHEN THE SHIP'S hold is full of water, then only does the buffeting of outside waters become a menace. The inside water is not so visibly threatening, its tumult not so stupendously apparent,—it destroys with its dead weight. So the temptation is strong to cast all the blame on the waves outside. But if good sense does not dawn in time, on all hands manning the pumps, then sinking is inevitable. However hopeless the task of getting rid of the internal water may

now and then appear, it is surely more hopeful than trying to bale away the water of the outside seas!

Obstacles and opposition from without there always will be, but they become dangers only when there are also obstacles and opposition within.

66

WHEN WE COME to believe that we are in possession of our God because we belong to some particular sect, it gives us such a complete sense of comfort, that God is needed no longer except for quarrelling with others whose idea of God differs from ours in theoretical details.

Having been able to make provision for our God in some shadow-land of creed, we feel free to reserve all the space for ourselves in the world of reality, ridding it of the wonder of the infinite, making it as trivial as our own household furniture. Such unlimited vulgarity only becomes possible when we have no doubt in our minds that we believe in God while our life ignores Him.

67

THE PIOUS MAN of sect is proud because he is confident of his right of possession in God. The man of devotion is meek because he is conscious of God's right of love over his life and soul. The object of our possession becomes smaller than ourselves, and without acknowledging it in so many words the bigoted sectarian has an implicit belief that God can be kept secured for certain individuals in a cage which is of their own make. In a similar manner the primitive races of men believe that their ceremonials have a magic influence upon their deities. Sectarianism is a perverse form of worldliness in the disguise of religion; it breeds a narrowness of heart in a greater measure than the cult of the world based upon material interest can ever do. For undisguised pursuit of self has its safety in its openness, like filth exposed to the sun and air. But the self-magnification with its consequent lessening of God that goes on unchecked under the cover of sectarianism loses its chance of salvation because it defiles the very source of purity.

68

RELIGION, LIKE POETRY, is not a mere idea, it is expression. The self-expression of God is in the endless variedness of creation; and our attitude towards the Infinite Being must also in its expression have a variedness of individuality ceaseless and unending. Those sects which jealously build their boundaries with too rigid creeds excluding all spontaneous movement of the living spirit may keep hoarded their theology, but they kill religion.

69

THE ATTEMPT TO make the one religion which is their own prevail for all time and space, comes naturally to men addicted to sectarianism. This makes it offensive to them to be told that God is generous in His distribution of love, and His means of communication with men have not been restricted to a blind

lane abruptly stopping at one historical point of time and place. If humanity ever happens to be overwhelmed with a catastrophe of a universal flood of one religion, then God will have to make provision for another Noah's Ark to save His creatures from a spiritual destruction.

70

WHEN RELIGION IS in the complete possession of the sect and is made smooth to the level of the monotonous average, it becomes correct and comfortable, but loses the living spirit of art. For art is the expression of the universal through the individual, and religion in its outer aspect is the art of the human soul. It almost becomes a matter of pride and a sign of superior culture to be able to outrage all codes of decency imposed by an authorized religion bearing the stamp of approval of an organization which can persecute but has not the power to persuade.

As an analogous phenomenon, we have known literary men deliberately cultivating a dread of whatever has the reputation of goodness, and also men of art afraid of being suspected as lovers of the beautiful. They rebel against the fact that what is proper and what is true in beauty and in goodness have become mixed up in men's minds. The appraisement of what is proper does not require any degree of culture or natural sensitiveness of mind, and therefore it fetches a ready price in the market, outbids truth, becomes petty in its tyranny and leaves smudges of vulgarity upon things that are precious. To rescue truth from the dungeon of propriety has ever been the mission of poets and artists, but in the time of revolution they are apt to go further by rejecting truth itself.

In our epic Râmâyana, when Prince Rāmachandra won back his wife from the clutches of the giant who had abducted her, his people clamoured for her rejection, suspecting defilement. Similarly in art fastidious men of culture are clamouring for the banishment of the beautiful because she has been allowed to remain so long in the possession of propriety.

71

THOSE WHO HAVE their enterprises in the world of Nature, master her forces, becoming rich in wealth and power. The greatest gain which comes across their path in their adventures is moral truth. For power is combination, and all combinations, in order to be perfect, need the help of the moral law, in which individuals acknowledge the universal principle of the good. Moral truth is most needed when men move, and move together.

But laws, whether in Nature where it is physical, or in society where it is moral, are external. They are formal, lacking that deeper mystery of perfectness, which is creation; which is in the beauty of harmony in Nature; which is in the beauty of love in man. Law is the channel of finitude through which things evolve without ceasing, but its meaning lies in its revolution round an inner centre which is infinite. We follow law to live; we reach the centre to find immortality.

72

FOLLOWING THE interminable current of law, exploring the countless fields of forces and openings of wealth, we talk of endless endeavour but of no ultimate gain. We know that power thrives in moving. When it stumbles against some final object it receives its death-fall. We of all peoples in the world know to our cost that when nations grow weary of their quest, settling down to store up and to arrange their possessions; when with their distrust of new ideas their morals stiffen into conventions, becoming unfit to guide them in the path of life's adventures, keeping them bound to growthless traditions, then they are gradually pushed away from life's high road by the moving forces of history.

But this endlessness of movement in the outer world only proves that there we have no goal to reach and our goal is somewhere else. It is in the inner region of spirit. There our deepest longing is for that peace which rests upon fulfilment. There we meet our God. He is the ever-moving power in the world. He is the ever-reposing love in the soul. God eludes us in Nature to call us onward; in the soul He surrenders Himself to gather us to His heart. This is why, in the realm of power, we grow by aggrandizement; but, in the realm of love, we grow by renunciation. This is why, though in our worldly ambition pride acts as an incentive, it is the greatest of all obstacles in our spiritual aspiration.

73

IN A LYRICAL poem, the metre and the idea are blended in one. Treated separately, they reveal themselves as two contrary forces; and instances are common in which their natural antagonism has not been overcome, thus resulting in the production of bad poems.

We are the artists, before whom lie materials which are mutually obstructive. They continually clash, until they develop into a creation perfect in unity. Very often, in order to shirk trouble and secure peace, we sacrifice one of the contending parties. This makes the fight impossible, but also the creation. The restless spirit of nature divorced from the soul's repose drives us to the madness of work which piles up towers of things. On the other hand the spiritual being deprived of its world of reality lives only in the exile of abstraction, creating phantoms in which exaggerations, unchecked by the strict necessities of forms, run riot.

74

WHEN THE MAN-made world is less an expression of man's creative soul than a mechanical device for some purposes of power, then it hardens and narrows itself, attains too definite a character, leading to proficiency at the cost of the immense suggestiveness of life. In his creative activities man establishes human relationships with his surroundings, making Nature instinct with his own life and love. But with his utilitarian energies he fights Nature, banishes her from his world, deforms and defiles her with the ugliness of his callous ambitions. This world of man's own manufacture with its discordant shrieks

and mechanical movements incessantly suggests to him and convinces him of a scheme of universe which is an abstract system, having no touch of the person and therefore no ultimate reality.

75

WITH THE TRUTH of our expression we grow in truth. The truth of art is in the disinterested joy of creation, which is fatally injured when betrayed into a purpose alien to itself. All the great civilizations that have become extinct must have come to their end through some constant wrong expression of humanity; through slavery imposed upon fellow-beings; through parasitism on a gigantic scale bred by wealth, by man's clinging reliance on material resources; through a scoffing spirit of scepticism robbing us of our means of sustenance in the path of truth.

76

CONSCIOUSNESS IS THE light by the help of which we travel along our path of life. But we cannot afford to squander this light at every step. Economy we need, and habit is that economy. It enables us to live and think without fully keeping our mind illumined. On festival nights we do not count the cost of our excess of light, because it is not for removing some deficiency, but for expressing the sense of our inner exuberance. And for the same reason habit becomes a sign of poverty in our spiritual life; for it is not a life of necessity, but of expression. In our love, our consciousness has to remain at its brightest, in order to be true. For love is no mere carrying out of some purpose, it is the full illumination of consciousness itself.

77

IF WE ALLOW our act of worship to deaden into a habit, then it frustrates itself, stiffening into mere piety which is a calculated economy of love. For worship has its worth, not in the action, but in a perfect outflow of consciousness in which habit has the tendency of becoming an impediment. We grow worldly in our devotion when we imagine that it confers upon us some special advantage, thus causing pious habits to be formed and valued. For when it is a question of profit, buying in the cheapest market is the best wisdom; but when complete giving out is the sole object, then economy is cheating one's own self.

78

THERE IS ONE thing which is common in the process of the physical and the spiritual life. In both it is essential that we must forget the self. We know all the better what is around us by not having to remember our own selves at every step. When we are more to ourselves, then the world is less to us. But forgetfulness of self in our ordinary life of usefulness is mostly negative, it is attained by habit. Not so in the spiritual life, where self is forgotten because love is there. It is like the individual word, losing its meaning where it is separate, but regaining itself all the more where it is one with the whole poem.

In the spiritual life we forget our exclusive individual purpose and are flooded with the spirit of perfection which through us transcends ourselves. In this we feel our immortality, which is the great meaning of our life.

79

OUR NATURE BEING complex, it is unsafe to generalize about things that are human; and it is an incomplete statement of truth to say that habits have the sole effect of deadening our mind. The habits that are helpful are like a channel, which helps the current to flow. It is open where the water runs onward, guarding it only where it has the danger of deviation. The bee's life in its channel of habit has no opening,—it revolves within a narrow circle of perfection. Man's life has its institutions which are its organized habits. When these act as enclosures, then the result may be perfect, like a beehive of wonderful precision of form, but unsuitable for the mind which has unlimited possibilities of growth.

80

FOR THE CURRENT of our spiritual life creeds and rituals are channels that may thwart or help according to their fixity or openness. When a symbol of spiritual idea becomes rigidly elaborate in its construction, it supplants the idea which it should support. In art and literature metaphors which are the symbol of our emotional perceptions excite our imagination but do not arrest it. For they never claim a monopoly of our attention; they leave open the way for the endless possibility of other metaphors. They lose their artistic value if they degenerate into fixed habits of expression. Shelley, in his poem of the Skylark, pours out images which we value because they are only a few suggestions of the immeasurableness of our enjoyment. But if, because of their fitness and beauty, a law were passed that while thinking about a skylark these images should be treated as final and no others admitted, then Shelley's poem would at once become false; for its truth is in its fluidity, in its modesty, which tacitly admits that it has not the last word.

81

THE OTHER GREAT body of ours is the world, with which this little body of ours ever aspires to establish a perfect relation of harmony. Is it simply for the sake of some convenience? Do our eyes try to see lest some danger or obstacle should come unawares in the dark, lest we might fail to find the things that are needful? No doubt these are powerful incentives, but the great fact lies in the delight of the meeting of our eyes with the world of lines, colours, and movements. There is an incessant call from this universe of light, of sound, of touch, to our eyes, to our ears, to our limbs, and the response to it is a fulfilment which not only belongs to us, but to the great world. And this is the reason why from remote ages light incessantly knocked at the closed gates of life's blindness, till after repeated efforts life opened its windows of sight, and the union of the two was perfected. This was a wedding whose highest meaning is in its joy.

82

WE HAVE A mental body, which has its organs of thought and feeling. There is the great social mind of man with which it seeks its harmony, for the perfecting of which experiments are carried on without rest. This aspiration also has not its source in expediency. It is an impulse for union which drives our mind across our little home and neighbourhood to its love tryst abroad. It must unite with the great mind of humanity to find its fulfilment. The beehive is the product of the truth of the unity in the bee's life; but literature, art, and politics, moral laws and religions, which have no end to their freedom of growth, are born of the wedding of the man with Man.

83

THE QUESTION IS asked, if life's journey be endless where is its goal? The answer is, it is everywhere. We are in a palace which has no end, but which we have reached. By exploring it and extending our relationship with it we are ever making it more and more our own. The infant is born in the same universe where lives the adult of ripe mind. But its position is not like a schoolboy who has yet to learn his alphabet, finding himself in a college class. The infant has its own joy of life because the world is not a mere road, but a home, of which it will have more and more as it grows up in wisdom. With our road the gain is at the end, but with this world of ours the gain is at every step; for it is the road and the home in one; it leads us on yet gives us shelter.

84

OUR LIFE IN the world is like listening to a song, to enjoy which we do not wait till it is finished. The song is there, in the singing from the very first note. Its unity permeates all its parts and therefore we do not impatiently seek the end, but follow the development. In the same way, because the world is truly one its parts do not tire us—only, our joy grows in depth with our deeper comprehension of its unity. At the moment when our various energies are employed with the varied in the world of Nature and of man, the One in us is growing up towards the One in all. If the many and the one, the endless movement and the eternal reaching of the goal, were not in harmony in our being, our existence would be to us like ever learning grammar, and yet never coming to know any language.

PART III

85

NATURE IS A mistress who tempts us with liberal wages—so much so, that we work extra hours for the extra remuneration. Yet in the midst of this bribery and these temptations man still cries for deliverance. For he knows that he is not a born slave and he refuses to be deluded into believing that to follow one's own desires unhindered is freedom. His real trust lies in his growth and not

in his accumulations. The consciousness of a great inner truth lifts man from his surroundings of petty moments into the region of the eternal. It is the sense of something positive in himself for which he renounces his wealth, reputation, and life itself, and throws aside the scholar's book of logic, becoming simple as a child in his wisdom.

86

IN FACT, MAN wants to reach that inner region where he can take his stand in the perfection of his unity, and not there where link upon link is forged, in an endless series, in the chain of things and events.

But as our body seeks its harmony with the great world-body for its fulfilment, so the One in us seeks its union with the great One. The One in us knows itself, has its delight in itself and expresses itself in its activities. It is truth and joy and expression. Therefore its union with the highest One must be in wisdom, in love, and in service. This is our religion, that is to say, our higher nature. Its purposes cannot be definitely pointed out and explained, for it belongs to that life in the spiritual world where our objects have their recognition in something which we vaguely try to describe as blessedness,—a state of perfection, which is an end in itself. It is easy for man to ignore it and yet live, but man never did ignore it. He doubts it, mocks it, and strikes it, he fails in his realization of it, but even in his failures and rebellions, in his desperate attempts to escape from it, he revolves round this one great truth.

87

A BLOCK OF stone is unplastic, insensitive, inert, it offers resistance to the creative idea of the artist. But for a sculptor its very obstacles are an advantage and he carves his image out of it. Our physical existence is an obstacle to our spirit, it has every aspect of a bondage, and to all appearance it is a perpetual humiliation to our soul. And therefore it is the best material for our soul to manifest herself through it, to proclaim her freedom by fashioning her ornaments out of her fetters. The limitations of our outer circumstances are only to give opportunities to our soul, and by being able to defy them she realizes her truth.

88

OUR LIVING BODY in its relations to the physical world has its various wishes. These are to eat, to sleep, to keep warm or cool, as necessity demands—and many others. But it has one permanent wish, which is deeper and therefore hidden. It is the wish for health. It works every moment, fighting diseases and making constant adjustments with changing circumstances. The greater proportion of its activities are carried on behind our consciousness. He who has wisdom in regard to his physical welfare knows this and tries to establish harmony between the bodily desires that are conscious and this one desire which is latent. And he willingly sacrifices the claims of his appetites to the higher claim of his health.

We have our social body in which we come into relation with other men. Its obvious wishes are those that are connected with our selfish impulses. We want to get more than others and pay less than is our due. But there is another wish, deeply inherent in our social life, which is concerned with the welfare of the community. He who has social wisdom knows this and tries to bring all his clamorous wishes about personal pleasure, comfort, and freedom under the dominion of this hidden wish for the good of others.

Likewise the obvious wish of our soul is to realize the distinction of its individuality, but it has its inherent wish to surrender itself in love to the Great Soul.

The wish for health takes into account the future of the body. The wish for the social good also has its outlook upon the time to come. They face the infinite. The wish of our soul to be one in love with the Great Soul transcends all limitations. Thus in our body, society, and soul we find on the surface the activity of numerous wishes and in their depth that of the one will which gives these wishes unity, leading them to peace, goodness, and love. In other words, on the one hand we have the wishes of the moment, and on the other the wish for the eternal. It is the function of our soul to unite these two and build its heaven upon the foundation of the earth.

89

A YOUNG FRIEND of mine comes to me this morning to inform me that it is his birthday and that he has just reached his nineteenth year. The distance between my age and his is great, and yet when I look at him it is not the incompleteness of his life which strikes me, but something which is complete in his youth. And in this differs the thing which grows, from the thing which is being made. A building in its unfinished stage is only too evidently unfinished. But in life's growth every stage has its perfection, the flower as well as the fruit.

90

WHEN I WAS a child, God also became a child with me to be my playmate. Otherwise my imperfections would have weighed me down, and every moment it would have been a misery to be and yet not fully to be. The things that kept me occupied were trifling and the things I played with were made of dust and sticks. But nevertheless my occupations were made precious to me, and the importance that was given to my toys made them of equal value with the playthings of the adult. The majesty of childhood won for me the world's homage, because there was revealed the infinite in its aspect of the small.

And the reason is the same, which gives the youth the right to claim his full due and not to be despised. The divinity which is ever young has crowned him with his own wreath, whispering to his ears that he is the rightful inheritor of all the world's wealth.

The infinite is with us in the beauty of our childhood, in the strength of our youth, in the wisdom of our age; in play, in earning, and in spending.

91

THE BEAUTY WHICH is in this evening sky comprehends forces tremendous in their awfulness. Yet it reveals to us the harmony which must be in the centre of all world activities, the harmony which has a still voice which is music itself. Because we are able to take view of this evening world where the distant and the near are brought face to face, we can see what is positively true in it—its beauty and unfathomable peace. When, through death, the deathlessness of some great life is discovered, the same vision of peace is revealed to us. The profound soul of Buddha is brought before our minds like this evening sky, and through all his struggles and sorrows, through his compassionate toil for men, we see a perfect assurance and repose of strength which is beauty. In smaller men the field of life is too narrow and therefore contradictions are too exaggerated to permit us any complete view of truth. But we may be sure that in the currents of their lives as they run beyond death these contradictions are harmonized; for truth is over all, and beauty is the expression of truth.

92

IN THE UPANISHAD God is described as 'The Peaceful, the Good, the One'. His peace is the peace of truth which we clearly see in Nature. The earth moves and the stars, every cell is moving and working in this tree, every blade of grass in this field is busy, and every atom of this evening star is restless, but peace is in the heart of all this movement—this movement which is creative. The movement which lacks this inner peace destroys. God, as the Peaceful, is revealed to him who has attained truth in his life, the truth which is ever active and yet which has an immensity of repose born of the mastery of self. It is not the loss of energy, the waning of life, which is peace, but their perfection.

An ignorant man finding himself in a factory for the first time in his life, is frightened at the bewildering medley of movements, but he who knows it is struck with admiration at the concentration of purpose dwelling in its centre, unmoved. This takes away all misgivings, and the perfect correlation of activities appears as beautiful. This is the peace which belongs to truth.

93

LIFE IS A flow of harmony that unites the in and the out, the end and the means, the what is and the what is to come. Life does not store up but assimilates, does not construct but creates, its work and itself are never dissociated. When the materials of our surroundings are not living, when they are fixed habits and hoarded possessions, then our life and our world become separated and their mutual discord ends in the destruction of both. Or when some unbalanced excess of passion takes predominance in the buildings of our own world, its distribution of weight goes wrong, and it constantly oppresses the wholeness of our life. The source of all the great evils in society, in government, in other organizations is in the alienation of the living being from its outer habitation.

94

THE WORLD OF senses in which animals live is limited. Our reason has opened the gate for our mind into the heart of the infinite. Yet this freedom of reason is but a freedom in the outer courtyard of existence. Objects of knowledge maintain an infinite distance from us who are the knowers. For knowledge is not union. Therefore the further world of freedom awaits us there where we reach truth, not through feeling it by senses or knowing it by reason, but through union of perfect sympathy. This is an emancipation difficult fully to imagine; we have but glimpses of its character. We perceive the fact of a picture by seeing it; we know about it by measuring its lines, analysing its colours and studying the laws of harmony in its composition. But even then it is no realization of the picture, for which we want an intimate union with it immediate to ourselves.

95

THE PICTURE OF a flower in a botanical book is an information; its mission ends with our knowledge. But in pure art it is a personal communication. And therefore until it finds its harmony in the depth of our personality it misses its mark. We can treat existence solely as a textbook furnishing us lessons and we shall not be disappointed. But we know that there its mission does not end. For by our joy in it, which is an end in itself, we feel that it is a communication, the final response to which is not the response of our knowing but the response of our being.

96

WHEN BUDDHA preached *Maitri*—the relationship of harmony—not only with human beings but with all creation, did he not have this truth in his mind, that our treatment of the world is wrong when we solely treat it as a fact which can be known and used? Did he not feel that its meaning can be attained only through love, because it is an expression of love which waits for its answer from our soul emancipated from the bondage of self? This emancipation cannot be negative in character, for love can never lead to negation. The perfect freedom is in a perfect harmony of relationship and not in a mere severance of bondage. Freedom has no content, and therefore no meaning, where it has nothing but itself. Soul's emancipation is in the fulfilment of its relation to the central truth of everything that there is, which is impossible to define because it is in the end of all definitions.

97

NO FLAME BURNS for ever. Light goes out for want of oil, is puffed out by the wind, often the lamp itself is shattered. In our fit of irritation we may say that the power of darkness is final and true, or that we create light ourselves by lighting the lamp. But the truth is that every extinction of light is to prove that the source of light is without end, and man's true power lies only in his ability to prove this over and over again.

98

I BELIEVE THAT there is an ideal hovering over and permeating the earth,—an ideal of that Paradise which is not the mere outcome of fancy, but the ultimate reality in which all things are and towards which all things are moving. I believe that this vision of Paradise is to be seen in the sunlight, and the green of the earth, in the flowing streams, in the gladness of springtime, the repose of a winter morning, in the beauty of a human face and the wealth of human love. Everywhere in this earth the spirit of Paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. It reaches our inner ears without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life, urging us to send our aspiration beyond the finite, as flowers send their perfume into the air and birds their songs.

99

OUR ENERGIES ARE employed in supplying ourselves with things and pleasures. They have no eternity in their background. Therefore we try to give things an appearance of permanence by making them big. Man in his anxiety to prolong his pleasure and power tries to make additions, and we are afraid to stop, because we fear that they must some day come to an end.

But truth is not afraid to be small, to come to an end,—just as a poem, when it is finished, is not really dead. Not because a poem is composed of endless lines, but because it carries an ideal of perfection. The pauses of truth have the cadence of the infinite, its disappearances are the processional arches on its path of immortality.

100

WE LIGHT THE lamp in our room which creates a seeming opposition between it and the great outside world. Our life on the earth is like that small room in which our consciousness has been concentrated. And we imagine that outside it lies death which opposes it. But the one indivisible truth of existence which is for us must not be doubted because our life obscures it for a moment.

101

THE VISION OF life which we see in the world is a vision of joy. The joy is in its ever-flowing colour, music and dance. If there were truth in death this spirit of joy would vanish from the heart of existence. The lamp we light in the night has a wick which is small and oil which is very little. But there is no timidness in its tiny flame, burning as it is in the heart of an immense darkness; for the truth of the light which sustains it is infinite.

102

THE WORLD, LIKE a stream of sounds in music, is a perpetual flow of forces and forms, and therefore from the outside it has an aspect of impermanence. There it represents death, being a continual current of losses. But the loss is only for the channel, the instrument through which music is made to pass. It is the unity of melody which ever survives the fleeting notes. If individual notes

could claim a prolonged endlessness, then they would miss their true eternity which is the music. The desert has the quality of the immutable because it lacks life. In a soil which is fruitful, life reveals its immortality by its ceaseless passage through death.

103

IT IS GIVEN to us to reveal our soul, that which is One in us, which is eternal. This can only be done by its passage through the fleeting Many; to assert the infinity of the spirit by continual sacrifice of forms. The self being the vessel that gathers and holds gives us the opportunity of giving up. If we believe only in self, then we anxiously cling to our stores, which causes us misery and failure. When we believe in soul the very inconstancy of life finds its eternal meaning and we feel that we can afford to lose.

104

THAT WHICH I value most in my religion or my aspiration, I seek to find corroborated, in its fundamental unity, in other great religions, or in the hopes expressed in the history of other peoples. Each great movement of thought and endeavour in any part of the world may have something unique in its expression, but the truth underlying any of them never has the meretricious cheapness of utter novelty about it. The great Ganges must not hesitate to declare its essential similarity to the Nile of Egypt, or to the Yangtse-Kiang of China.

105

I BLEW OUT the lamp with the idea of turning into bed. No sooner had I done so than, through the open windows, the moonlight burst into the room, with a shock of surprise.

That little bit of a lamp had been sneering dryly at me, like some Mephistopheles: and that tiniest sneer had screened off this infinite light of joy issuing forth from the deep love which is in all the world.

If I had gone off to bed leaving the shutters closed, and thus missed this vision, it would have stayed there all the same without any protest against the mocking lamp inside. Even if I had remained blind to it all my life,—letting the lamp triumph to the end,—till for the last time I went darkling to bed,—even then the moon would have still been there, sweetly smiling unperturbed and unobstructive, waiting for me as she has throughout the ages.

106

IN OUR HIGHLY complex modern civilization, mechanical forces are organized with such efficiency that the materials produced grow far in advance of man's selective and assimilative capacity to simplify them into harmony with his nature and needs. Such an intemperate overgrowth of things, like the rank vegetation of the tropics, creates confinement for man. The nest is simple, it has an easy relationship with the sky; the cage is complex and costly, it is too

much itself, excommunicating whatever lies outside. And modern man is busy building his cage, fast developing his parasitism on the monster. *Thing*, which he allows to envelop him on all sides. He is always occupied in adapting himself to its dead angularities, limits himself to its limitations, and merely becomes a part of it.

107

LIKE THE POSITION of the earth, in the course of its diurnal and annual motions, man's life, at any moment, must be the reconciliation of its two movements, — one round the centre of its own personality, and another whose centre is in a luminous ideal comprehending the whole human world. The international endeavours of a people must carry the movement of the people's own personality round the great spirit of man. The inspiration must be its own, which is to help it in its aspiration towards fulfilment. Otherwise, mere cosmopolitanism drifts on the waves, buffeted by wind from all quarters, in an imbecility of movement which has no progress.

108

ALL CIVILIZATIONS ARE creations. They do not merely offer us information about themselves, but give outer expression to some inner ideals which are creative. Therefore we judge each civilization, not by how much it has produced, but by what idea it expresses in its activities. When, in things which are creation, the structure gets the better of the spirit, then it is condemned. When a civilization merely gives a large stock of facts about its own productions, its mechanical parts, its outward successes, then we know that there must be anarchy in its world of idea, that some living part is lacking, that it will be torn with conflicts and will not be able to hold together human society in the spirt of truth.

109

IN THE REALM of Biology man and beast are not distinct, as there viewed, self-preservation and race preservation are of equal importance in the nature of both. But man's spirit fails to find in these features the true significance of man. So, however deep-seated or widespread man's desire to dine may be, his literature has but scanty recognition of it. Man's eating propensity may be an insistent, but it is not a significant truth; that is why the satisfaction of his hunger is not one of the joys that have found a place in the paradise of his art-world.

The sexual relationship of man and woman stands on a higher plane than man's appetite for food, for it has achieved an intimate connection with the relationship of hearts. The sex instinct which, in a basic view of life, has only a secondary place, has risen, in the sex relations of the larger life of man, to a position transcending even the primary; for love illumines man, within and without, into a supreme intensity of consciousness. That illumination is lacking in the primitive principle of race preservation, which therefore

assumes importance only on the plane of science. The union of hearts, as seen by us, is abstracted from the primitive needs of Nature into the glory of its own finality. And hence it has come to occupy so vast a place in Literature and the Arts.

110

THERE COMES AT last a day when the emancipated soul steps out of all bonds to face the Supreme soul. Having fulfilled the demands of all worldly relations, it must now prepare for the gain of new relations with the Infinite. Just as a good housewife, while dealing with diverse men and things in the course of her duties, is after all doing the work of her husband's household all the time, acknowledging at every step her relationship with him,— yet, at the end of the day, she puts aside all such work, performs her toilet afresh and, thus purifies and rejoicing, betakes herself alone with her husband to the privacy of their own particular chamber,— so does the soul, whose world-work is done, put away all finite matters and comes all alone to its communion with the Beloved, finding in that consummation the perfection of its own life.

111

SIGNS OF NASTY weather, at the very start of a journey, make one's whole being wilt. Our intellect is modern and staunch; it refuses to acknowledge omens. But our blood is full of old-time fears and anxieties, which, like the waves beyond the enclosure, will not be quieted, and keep knocking against and leaping over our reasoned conclusions. The intellect has ensconced itself behind barriers of reason, out of touch with the inarticulate voices of the universe. The blood has remained outside; on it fall the shadow of the clouds and the surge of far-away billows; the piping of the wind makes it dance, and its moods respond to the play of light and shade,— so that when the elements are unkind it cannot help being disconsolate.

112

JUST AS IT does not do to have the writer entirely removed from the feeling to which he is giving expression, so also it does not conduce to the truest poetry to have him too close to it. Memory is the brush which can best lay on the true poetic colour. Nearness has too much of the compelling about it, and the imagination is not sufficiently free unless it can get away from its influence. Not only in poetry, but in all art, the mind of the artist must attain a certain degree of aloofness— the *creator* within man must be allowed the sole control. If the subject matter gets the better of the creation, the result is a mere replica of the event, not a reflection of it through the artist's mind.

113

TO BE ABLE to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be attached to them, this is a great service. Providence expects that we

should make this world our own, and not live in it as though it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own by some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul. From your own experience you can see the difference between the beautiful, the tender, the hospitable: and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful.

114

WHERE THE STORE of energy runs low, a cheap asceticism supervenes. The type of renunciation that results, means only a shaking off of responsibility from one's own shoulders, a fatalistic submission to discomfort, disorder, disease, or whatever else it may be. Consolation is then sought in the attempt to make out that there is something glorious in such submission. On the other hand, he who has abundance of energy takes delight in accepting the challenge of strenuous aims; he lives forcefully.

115

CIVILIZATION CANNOT merely be a growing totality of happenings that by chance have assumed a particular shape and tendency which we consider to be excellent. It must be the expression of some guiding moral force which we have evolved in our society for the object of attaining perfection. The word 'perfection' has a simple and definite meaning applied to an inanimate thing, or even to a creature whose life has principally a biological significance. But man being complex and always on the path of transcending himself, the meaning of the word 'perfection' cannot be crystallized into an inflexible idea. This has made it possible for different races to have different shades of definition for this term.

116

THAT WHICH MERELY gives us information can be explained in terms of measurement, but that which gives us joy cannot be explained by the facts of a mere grouping of atoms and molecules. Somewhere in the arrangement of this world there seems to be a great concern about giving us delight, which shows that, in the universe, over and above the meaning of matter and force, there is a message conveyed through the magic touch of personality. This touch cannot be analysed, it can only be felt.

117

WHATEVER I TRULY think, truly feel, truly realize, its natural destiny is to find true expression. There is some force in me which continually works towards that end, but is not mine alone,—it permeates the universe. When this universal force is manifested within an individual, it is beyond his control and acts according to its own nature; and in surrendering our lives to its power is our greatest joy. It not only gives us expression, but also sensitiveness and love: this makes our feelings so fresh to us every time, so full of wonder.

118

THE MORE ONE lives alone on the river or in the open country, the clearer it becomes that nothing is more beautiful or great than to perform the ordinary duties of one's daily life simply and naturally. From the grasses in the field to the stars in the sky, each one is doing just that; and there is such profound peace and surpassing beauty in Nature because none of these tries forcibly to transgress its limitations.

Yet what each one does is by no means of little moment. The grass has to put forth all its energy to draw sustenance from the uttermost tips of its rootlets simply to grow where it is as grass; it does not vainly strive to become a banyan tree: and so the earth gains a lovely carpet of green. And, indeed, what little of beauty and peace is to be found in the societies of men is owing to the daily performance of small duties, not to big doing and fine talk.

119

THINGS OF VITAL importance to society should never become too difficult of comprehension for the average intelligence of the people. For that creates a profound chasm between life's own need and the means of its satisfaction; and in that gaping hole all kinds of mischiefs find their lodging, because it is beyond the reach of the entire mind of the people. The vast dimensions and the technical character of our present-day written legal codes only prove what an elaborately painful arrangement of chains and screws, requiring expert help at every turn, is necessary to keep the lumbering modern deadness together.

120

THERE ARE TRUTHS which are of the nature of information, that can be added to our stock of knowledge from the outside. But there are other truths of the nature of inspiration, which cannot be used to swell the number of our accomplishments. These latter are not like food, but are rather the appetite itself, that can only be strengthened by inducing harmony in our bodily functions. Religion is such a truth. It establishes the right centre for life's activities, giving them an eternal meaning. It maintains the true standard of value for the objects of our striving and inspires in us the spirit of renunciation which is the spirit of humanity.

121

JUST AS HEALTH is a condition of man's whole body, so is religion of his whole nature. Health cannot be given in the same way as money is put into one's palm. But it may be induced by bringing about suitable conditions. Religious teaching, likewise, cannot be left to a school committee to be put on their syllabus along with Arithmetic and Euclid. No school inspector will be able to measure its progress. No examiner's blue pencil can assign it proper marks. An appropriate environment must be created in which religion may have its natural growth.

122

THE NEGATIVE process of curbing desire and controlling passion is only for saving our energy from dissipation and directing it into its proper channel. If the path of the channel we have chosen runs within-wards, it also must have its expression in action, not for any ulterior reward, but for the proving of its own truth. If the test of action is removed, if our realization grows purely subjective, then it may become like travelling in a desert in the night, going round and round the same circle, imagining all the while that we are following the straight path of progress.

123

LOVE LIGHTS UP this world with its meaning and makes life feel that it has everywhere that 'enough' which truly is its 'feast'. I know men who preach the cult of simple life by glorifying the spiritual merit of poverty. I refuse to imagine any special value in the poverty when it is a mere negation. Only when the mind has the sensitiveness to be able to respond to the deeper call of reality is it naturally weaned away from the lure of the fictitious value of things. It is callousness which robs us of our simple power to enjoy and dooms us to the indignity of a snobbish pride in furniture and the foolish burden of expensive things. But to pit the callousness of asceticism against the callousness of luxury is merely fighting one evil with the help of another, inviting the pitiless demon of the desert in place of the indiscriminate demon of the jungle.

124

WE MAY NOT know exactly what is happening; we do not know exactly even about a speck of dust. But when we feel the flow of life in us to be one with the universal life outside, then all our pleasures and pains are seen strung upon one long thread of joy. The fact: *I am, I move, I grow,* are seen in all their immensity in connection with the fact that everything else is there along with me and not the tiniest atom can do without me.

The relation of my soul to this beautiful autumn morning, this vast radiance, is one of intimate kinship; and all this colour, scent, and music is but the outward expression of our secret communion. This constant communion, whether realized or unrealized, keeps my mind in movement; out of this intercourse between my inner and outer worlds I gain such religion, be it much or little, as my capacity allows: and in its light I have to test scriptures before I can make them really my own.

125

FROM AGE TO age, thereafter, have I been diversely reborn on this earth. So whenever we now sit face to face, alone together, various ancient memories, gradually, one after another come back to me.

My mother earth sits to-day in the cornfields by the river-side, in her raiment of sunlit gold; and near her feet, her knees, her lap, I roll about and play. Mother has a multitude of children; she attends but absently to their

constant calls on her, with an immense patience, but also with a certain aloofness. She is seated there, with her far away look fastened on the verge of the afternoon sky, while I keep chattering on untiringly.

126

A TEACHER CAN never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lessons to his students can only load their minds; he cannot quicken them. Truth not only must inform but also inspire. If the inspiration dies out, and the information only accumulates, then truth loses its infinity. The greater part of our learning in the schools has been wasted because, for most of our teachers, their subjects are like dead specimens of once living things, with which they have a learned acquaintance, but no communication of life and love.

PART IV

127

THE QUESTION WHY there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection, or, in other words, why there is creation at all. We must take it for granted that it could not be otherwise; that creation must be imperfect, must be gradual, and that it is futile to ask the question, 'Why are we?"

But this is the real question we ought to ask: Is this imperfection the final truth, is evil absolute and ultimate? The river has its boundaries, its banks, but is a river all banks? or are the banks the final facts about the river? Do not these obstructions themselves give its water an onward motion? The towing-rope binds a boat, but is the bondage its meaning? Does it not at the same time draw the boat forward?

128

THE CURRENT OF the world has its boundaries, otherwise it could have no existence, but its purpose is not shown in the boundaries which restrain it, but in its movement, which is towards perfection. The wonder is not that there should be obstacles and sufferings in this world, but that there should be law and order, beauty and joy, goodness and love.

The idea of God that man has in his being is the wonder of all wonders. He has felt in the depths of his life that what appears as imperfect is the manifestation of the perfect, just as man who has an ear for music realizes the perfection of a song, while in fact he is only listening to a succession of notes. Man has found out the great paradox, that what is limited is not imprisoned within its limits, it is ever moving and therewith shedding its finitude every moment. In fact, imperfection is not a negation of perfectness, finitude is not

contradictory to infinity; they are but completeness manifested in parts, infinity revealed within bounds.

129

PAIN, WHICH IS the feeling of our finiteness, is not a fixture in our life. It is not an end in itself, as joy is. To meet with it is to know that it has no part in the true permanence of creation. It is what error is in our intellectual life. To go through the history of the development of science is to go through the maze of mistakes which it made current at different times. Yet no one really believes that science is the one perfect mode of disseminating mistakes. The progressive ascertainment of truth is the important thing to remember in the history of science, not its innumerable mistakes. Error, by its nature, cannot be stationary, it cannot remain with truth; like a tramp, it must quit its lodging as soon as it fails to pay its score to the full.

130

WHEN SCIENCE collects facts to illustrate the struggle for existence that is going on in the animal kingdom, it raises a picture in our minds of 'Nature red in tooth and claw". But in these mental pictures we give a fixity to colours and forms which are really evanescent. It is like calculating the weight of the air on each square inch of our body to prove that it must be crushingly heavy for us. With every weight, however, there is an adjustment, and we lightly bear our burden. With the struggle for existence in Nature there is reciprocity. There is the love for children and for comrades; there is the sacrifice of self, which springs from love; and this love is the positive element in life.

131

IF WE KEPT the searchlight for our observation turned upon the fact of death, the world appears to us like a huge charnel-house; but in the world of life the thought of death has, we find, the least possible hold upon our minds. Not because it is the least apparent, but because it is the negative aspect of life; just as, in spite of the fact that we shut our eyelids every second, it is the openings of the eyes that count. Life as a whole never takes death seriously. It laughs, dances, and plays; it builds, hoards, and loves in death's face. Only when we detach one individual fact of death do we see its blankness and become dismayed. We lose sight of the wholeness of a life of which death is part. It is like looking at a piece of cloth through a microscope. It appears like a net; we gaze at the big holes and shiver in imagination. But the truth is, death is not the ultimate reality. It looks black, as the sky looks blue; but it does not blacken existence, just as the sky does not leave its stain upon the wings of the bird.

132

AN IMPERFECTION which is not all imperfection, but which has perfection for its ideal, must go through a perpetual realization. Thus, it is the function of our

intellect to realize the truth through untruths, and knowledge is nothing but the continually burning up of error to set free the light of truth. Our will, our character, has to attain perfection by continually overcoming evils, either inside or outside us, or both; our physical life is consuming materials every moment to maintain the life fire; and our moral life, too, has its fuel to burn. This life process is going on—we know it, we have felt it; and we have a faith, which no individual instances to the contrary can shake, that the direction of humanity is from evil to good. For we feel that good is the positive element in man's nature, and in every age and every clime what man values most is his ideal of goodness. We have known the good, we have loved it, and we have paid our highest reverence to men who have shown in their lives what goodness is.

133

It is pain which is our true wealth as imperfect beings, and has made us great and worthy to take our seat with the perfect. He who has realized this knows that we are not beggars; that it is the hard coin which must be paid for everything valuable in this life, for our power, our wisdom, our love; that in pain is symbolized the infinite possibility of perfection, the eternal unfolding of joy; and the man who loses all pleasure in accepting pain sinks down and down, to the lowest depth of penury and degradation. It is only when we invoke the aid of pain for our self-gratification that she becomes evil and takes her vengeance for the insult done to her by hurling us into misery. For she is the vestal virgin consecrated to the service of the immortal perfection, and when she takes her true place before the altar of the infinite she casts off her dark veil and bares her face to the beholder as revelation of supreme joy.

134

Fortunately for man the easiest path is not his truest path. If his nature were not as complex as it is, if it were as simple as that of a pack of hungry wolves, then, by this time, those hordes of marauders would have overrun the whole earth. But man, when confronted with difficulties, has to acknowledge that he is man, that he has his responsibilities to the higher faculties of his nature, by ignoring which he may achieve success that is immediate, perhaps, but that will become a death-trap to him. For what are obstacles to the lower creatures are opportunities to the higher life of man.

135

True I also hear the great cry of pain ringing through the universe,—a cry that fills the firmament, the foundation whereon the universe is built, which in Vedic India was called the *krandasi*. This cry, however, is not the tired wail of the defeated, but rather the call of the new-born, thus loudly announcing its advent at the door of the universe, seeking hospitality of the eternal future. The proclaiming of new birth is always a cry of pain, for it implies a sundering

of former bonds, a bursting through former coverings. The right to a new existence is not lightly gained, it has to be striven and fought for.

136

ALL BROKEN TRUTHS are evil. They hurt because they suggest something which they do not offer. Death does not hurt us, but disease does, because disease constantly reminds us of health and yet withholds it from us. And life in a half-world is evil, because it feigns finality when it is obviously incomplete, giving us the cup, but not the draught of life. All tragedies consist in truth remaining a fragment, its cycle not being completed.

137

THE CHICKEN WITHIN the egg has rudimentary wings, rudimentary eyesight and legs. These are of no use while the chick is still in the shell. But some chicks, let us suppose, even while there, might feel that there must be a realm beyond where they can make full use of their potential faculties. Other chicks, again, being rationalists or logicians, might argue that there was no life beyond the shell. Human beings are likewise divided into those who have faith in the life beyond the shell, and those who have not; those who believe that we have faculties which are not to be accounted for by the intellect alone, and those who do not.

138

ONE MAY IMAGINE that an individual who succeeds in dissociating himself from his fellows attains real freedom, inasmuch as all ties of relationship imply obligation to others. But we know that, though it may sound paradoxical, it is true that in the human world only a perfect arrangement of interdependence gives rise to freedom. The most individualistic of human beings, who own no responsibility, are the savages who fail to attain their fullness of manifestation. They have become immersed in obscurity, like an ill-lighted fire that cannot liberate itself from its envelope of smoke. Only those attain their freedom from the segregation of an eclipsed life, who have the power to cultivate mutual understanding and co-operation. The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship.

139

WHAT IS IT in man that asserts its immortality in spite of the obvious fact of death? It is not his physical body or his mental organization. It is that deeper unity, that ultimate mystery in him, which, from the centre of his world, radiates towards its circumference; which is in his mind, yet grows beyond his mind; which, through the things belonging to him, expresses something that is not in them; which, while occupying his present, overflows its banks of the past and the future. It is the personality of a man, conscious of its inexhaustible abundance; it has the paradox in it that it is more than itself; it is more than as it is seen, as it is known, as it is used.

140

WHEN A MAN begins to have an extended vision of his true self, when he realizes that he is much more than at present he seems to be, he begins to get conscious of his moral nature. Then he grows aware of that which he is yet to be, and the state not yet experienced by him becomes more real than that under his direct experience. Necessarily, his perspective of life changes, and his will takes the place of his wishes. For will is the supreme wish of the larger life, the life whose greater portion is out of our present reach, whose objects are not for the most part before our sight.

141

GROWTH IS NOT the enlargement which is merely adding to the dimensions of incompleteness. Growth is the movement of a whole towards a yet fuller wholeness. Living things start with this wholeness from the beginning of their career. A child has its own perfection as a child; it would be ugly if it appeared as an unfinished man. Life is a continual process of synthesis, and not of additions. Our activities of production and enjoyment of wealth attain that spirit of wholeness when they are blended with a creative ideal. Otherwise they have the insane aspect of the eternally unfinished; they become like locomotive engines which have railway lines but no stations; which rush on towards a collision of uncontrolled forces or to a sudden breakdown of the overstrained machinery.

142

IT HAS BEEN said in our scriptures *'atithi devo bhava'*, asking us to realize that 'the Divine comes to us as our guest', claiming our homage. All that is great and true in humanity is ever waiting at our gate to be invited. It is not for us to question it about the country to which it belongs, but to receive it in our home and bring before it the best that we have. We are told in Kalidasa's drama, how Sakuntala, absorbed in her passionate love for Dushyanta, sat dreaming only of that which was the immediate object of her desire. She allowed the Guest to go away, unwelcomed and unattended. Therefore the curse fell on her that 'she should not realize her desire for the sake of which she neglected her duty'. When she forgot to pay her attention to him who was for her the representative of the large world of men, she lost her own little world of dreams.

143

LIFE IS ORIGINAL; it is adventurous; it seeks itself in endless experiments, the outcome of its spontaneous creative impulse. The people who passively lend themselves to imitation prove that life has lost its best claim on their hearts. It is the temptation of *Māra*, the evil spirit of Untruth, which whispers to us that we can be better than we are by seeming to be something else. . . . Our subconscious self has the accumulation of ages of creative memory, wherein has grown in secret the racial genius which creates. The whole current of a people's history generates its own special energy of guidance in this region

lying beneath the surface-consciousness of our mind. This is why, when we try to imitate some other peoples' history, we remain so pathetically unaware of the absurdities that are produced.

144

In our own days, through the advance of modern science, the rapid transport of modern times has altered the past situation irrevocably. The physical barriers between man and man are overcome; only the barriers of habit remain. But men go on living as though the old limitations were still real. In place of the natural obstacles of the past, they put up their own artificial modes of exclusion—their armaments, their prohibitive tariffs, their passport regulations, their national politics and diplomacies. These new obstructions, being artificial, are burdens that crush the people under the weight of their dead material and create deformities in their moral nature.

The mentality of the world has to be changed in order to meet the new environment of the modern age. Otherwise we shall never attain that peace which is the infinite atmosphere of Truth.

145

Man has a feeling that in him the creative manifestation of life has come to the end of a cycle, ready to ascend to one still wider and higher. When life first evolved its physical senses from the depth of amorphous darkness, it came to a wondrous world of forms, and this adventurous spirit of life is yet urging the spirit within man to develop an inner vision which will lead him through these endless forms into a world of infinite meaning, where he will cross the boundaries of the senses to a freedom which is ineffable.

146

It is well known that when greed has for its object material gain, then it can have no end. It is like the chasing of the horizon by a lunatic. To go on in a competition of multiplying millions is a steeplechase of insensate futility, that has obstacles but no goal. It has for its parallel the fight with material weapons, weapons which must perpetually be multiplied, opening up new vistas of destruction, and evoking new forms of insanity in the forging of frightfulness.

147

According to India's ideal, even the home must be given up in due course, in quest of the Infinite,—the household, in fact, is only to be set up as an important stage in this quest. Even to-day, we see our householders, when their children are grown up, leaving their home to spend the rest of their life in some place of pilgrimage. Here is another pair of opposites which India attempted to reconcile. On the one hand, her civilization is essentially bound up in the home, albeit a home in which a wide circle of relationships find their place. On the other, its endeavour is, one by one, to snap all earthly ties in its

pursuit of the liberation of the soul. In fact, it recognizes the social bonds because it is only through their acceptance that they can be transcended. In order to get rid of the natural desires of man, they must be used up; that is to say, guided by the spirit of renunciation to their own extinction.

148

I believe it is not an uncommon experience for us to come to moments of perfect mental detachment, when the soul seems to flow into the things that are before it, when a tree standing in our view comes as intimately close to us as our breath itself. It is not a state of blurred perception, but of freed consciousness overflowing its banks of mind—drowning the facts of things and finding its way into the truth which is their spirit.

149

Life was but feeble when it first hoisted its own banner of revolt. Immense, ponderous, adamantine, Matter stood around, bludgeon in hand, seeking to keep it confined within the closed doors and windows of its prison walls of dust. But the rebel, Life, was not to be intimidated. Innumerable are the holes it is driving in those walls, making way for the light from every side. No creature has advanced so far as man, in this cult of rebellion that is of the essence of Being. And those races of men in whom this capacity for rebellion has been the strongest and the most irrepressible, have dominated history from age to age, not merely by the extent, but also by the intensity of their existence.

150

Creative expressions attain their perfect form through emotions modulated. Woman has that expression natural to her—a cadence of restraint in her behaviour, producing poetry of life. She has been an inspiration to man, guiding most often unconsciously his restless energy into an immense variety of creations in literature, art, music, and religion. This is why, in India, woman has been described as the symbol of Shakti, the creative power.

151

We rarely realize how false for us is that which we hear from other lips, or keep repeating with our own, while all the time the temple of our Truth is being built within us, brick by brick, day after day. We fail to understand the mystery of this eternal building when we view our joys and sorrows apart by themselves, in the midst of fleeting time; just as a sentence becomes unintelligible if one has to spell through every word of it.

When once we perceive the unity of the scheme of that creation which is going on in us, we realize our relation to the ever-unfolding universe. We realize that we are in the process of being created in the same way as are the glowing heavenly orbs, which revolve in their courses,—our desires, our sufferings, all finding their proper place within the whole.

152

THE HUMAN RACES will never again be able to go back to their citadels of high-walled exclusiveness. They have been exposed to each other, physically and intellectually. The shells, which have so long given them full security within their individual enclosures, have been broken, and by no artificial process can they be mended again. So we have to accept this fact, even though we have not yet fully adapted our minds to this changed environment of publicity, even though through it we may have to run all the risks entailed by the wider expansion of life's freedom.

153

CIVILIZED MAN HAS come far away from the orbit of his normal life. He has gradually formed and intensified some habits that are like those of bees for adapting himself to his hive-world. We so often see modern men suffering from *ennui*, from world-weariness, from a spirit of rebellion against their environment for no reasonable cause whatever. Social revolutions are constantly ushered in with a suicidal violence that has its origin in our dissatisfaction with our hive-wall arrangement,—the too-exclusive enclosure that deprives us of the perspective which is so much needed to give us the proper proportion in our art of living. All this is an indication that man has not really been moulded in the model of the bee, and therefore he becomes recklessly anti-social when his freedom to be more than social is ignored.

154

THE SIGN OF greatness in great geniuses is their enormous capacity to borrow, very often without their knowing it; they have an unlimited credit in the world market of culture. Only mediocrities are ashamed and afraid of borrowing, for they do not know how to pay back their debt in their own coin. Even the most foolish of critics does not dare blame Shakespeare for what he openly appropriated from outside his own national inheritance. The human soul is proud of its comprehensive sensitiveness; it claims its freedom of entry everywhere when it is fully alive and awake.

155

FOR AN ARTIST it is a great chance to be able to meet a man of personality who walks solitary among those who are mere fragments of a crowd which is always on the move, pressed from behind. Such men are the makers of history, and one cannot but feel anxious lest they might miss their eternity by using all their forces in capturing the present by its throat, leaving it killed for all future. Men have not altogether been rare who furiously created their world by trampling human materials into the shape of their megalomaniac dreams at last to burden history with the bleached bones of their short-lived glory; while there were others, the serene souls, who with their light of truth and magic of love have made deserts fruitful along endless stretches of grateful years.

156

A POET'S MISSION is to attract the voice which is yet inaudible in the air; to inspire faith in the dream which is unfulfilled; to bring the earliest tidings of the unborn flower to a sceptic world.

So many are there to-day who do not believe. They do not know that faith in a great future itself creates that future; that without faith you cannot recognize your opportunities, which come again and again, but depart unheeded. Prudent men and unbelievers have created dissensions, but it is the eternal child, the dreamer, the man of simple faith, who has built up great civilization.

157

TO GIVE US the taste of reality through freedom of mind is the nature of all arts. When in relation to them we talk of aesthetics, we must know that it is not about beauty in its ordinary meaning, but in that deeper meaning which a poet has expressed in his utterance: 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.' An artist may paint a picture of a decrepit person not pleasant to look at, and yet we call it perfect when we become intensely conscious of its reality.

158

I FEEL PROUD that I have been born in this great age. I know that it must take time before we can adjust our minds to a condition which is not only new, but almost exactly the opposite of the old. Let us not imagine the death-struggle of the doomed to be a sign of life. Let us announce to the world that the light of the morning has come, not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers, but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation; never for nourishing a spirit of rejection, but for that glad acceptance which constantly carries in itself the giving out of the best that we have.

159

HOPELESS TRAGEDIES of life can never technically be called beautiful, but when appearing against the background of art they delight us because of the convincingness of reality which they produce in our mind. It only proves that every object which fully asserts its existence to us because of its own inherent finality is beautiful; it is what is called in Sanscrit *manôhara*, the stealer of the mind,—the mind which stands between the knower and the known. We have our primal sympathy for all things that exist, for when realized they stimulate the consciousness of our own existence.

160

LIFE, WHICH IS an incessant explosion of freedom, finds its metre in continual falling back in death. Every day is a death, every moment even. If not, there would be an amorphous desert of deathlessness eternally dumb and still. For life also is *māyā*—as moralists love to say, its *is* and *is not*. All that we find in it

is the rhythm through which it shows itself. Are rocks and minerals any better? Has not science shown us the fact that the ultimate difference between one element and another is only that of rhythm? The fundamental distinction of gold from mercury lies merely in the difference of rhythm in their respective atomic constitutions, like the distinction of the king from his subject, which is not in their different constituents but in the different metres of their situation and circumstance. There you find behind the scene the Artist, the Magician of rhythm, who imparts an appearance of substance to the unsubstantial.

161

WHAT IS THIS rhythm? It is the movement generated and regulated by harmonious restrictions. This is the creative force in the hand of the artist. So long as words remain in an uncadenced prose form, they do not give us any lasting feeling of reality. The moment they are taken and put into rhythm they vibrate into a radiance. It is the same with the rose .... The rose appears to me to be still, but because of its metre of composition it has a lyric of movement within that stillness, which is the same as the dynamic quality of a picture that has a perfect harmony. It produces a music in our consciousness by giving it a swing of motion synchronous with its own. If the picture were to consist of a disharmonious aggregate of colours and lines, it would be deadly still. In perfect rhythm, the art form becomes like the stars which in their seeming stillness are never still, like a motionless flame which is nothing but movement.

162

THE I AM in me realizes its own extension, its own infinity, whenever it truly realizes something else. Unfortunately, owing to our limitations and a thousand and one preoccupations, a great part of our world, though closely surrounding us, is far away from the lamp-post of our attention; it is dim, it passes by us, a caravan of shadows like the landscape seen in the night from the window of all illuminated railway compartment; the passenger knows that the outside world exists, that it is important, but for the time being the railway carriage for him is far more significant. If among innumerable objects in this world there be a few that come under the full illumination of our soul and thus assume reality for us, they constantly cry to our creative mind for a permanent representation. They belong to the same domain as that desire of ours which represents the longing for the performance of our own self.

163

IN THE PICTORIAL, plastic, and verbal arts the object and our feelings with regard to it are closely associated, like the rose and its perfume. In music the feeling extracted in sound becomes itself an independent object. It assumes a tune form which is definite, but a meaning which is indefinable and yet gripping our mind with the sense of an absolute truth.

There came a time, centuries ago, in Bengal, when the divine love-drama

that had its eternal play in human souls was vividly revealed by a personality radiating its intimate realization of God. The mind of a whole people was stirred by the vision of the world as an instrument through which sounded the invitation to us to the meeting of bliss. The ineffable mystery of God's love-call taking shape in an endless panorama of colours and forms, finding its chorus in the symphony of human affections, inspired an activity in a music that overflowed the restrictions of classical conventionalism. Our *kirtan* music in Bengal came to its being like a star flung up by a burning whirlpool of emotion in the heart of a whole people.

164

THE WORLD AS an art is the play of the Supreme Person revelling in image-making. Try to find out the ingredients of the image—they elude you, they never reveal to you the eternal secret of appearance. In your effort to capture life as expressed in living tissue, you will find carbon, nitrogen, and many other things utterly unlike life, but never life itself. The appearance does not offer any commentary on itself through its materials. You may call it *māyā* and pretend to disbelieve it; but the great artist, the *Māyāvin*, is not hurt. For art *is māyā*, it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is. It never tries to conceal its evasiveness, it mocks even its own definition and plays the game of hide-and-seek through its constant flight in changes.

165

THE SPIRIT OF fight and the spirit of harmony both have their importance in the scheme of things. For making a musical instrument, the obduracy of materials has to be forced to yield to the purpose of the instrument-maker. But music itself is a revelation of beauty, it is not an outcome of fight: it springs from an inner realization of harmony. The musical instrument and the music both have their own importance for humanity.

The civilization that fights and conquers for man, and the civilization that realizes for him the fundamental unity in the depth of existence, are complementary to each other. When they join hands, human nature finds its balance; and its pursuits, through rugged paths, attain their ultimate meaning in an ideal of perfection.

166

COURAGE, IN THE ethics of peace, means the courage of self-sacrifice; there, bravery has for its object the triumph of renunciation. And, in societies where such sacrifice and renunciation are cultivated, not the individual but the household is the primitive unit, and such household is broad, not narrow in conception and content. That is why, as the Ramayana evolves from a collection of ballads into an epic, its main function is transformed from a narration of struggles against the outrages offered to the cult of tillage (*sītā*) into the exaltation of the ethics of the household. The unfaltering strength of self-renunciation which is needful for keeping true the varied relations, between king and subject, father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife,

master and servant, and among neighbours different in colour and character,—that is what it really glorifies.

167

Because the world of reality has more extensive boundaries for the poet and the artist, they can bring out the significance of a much larger variety of things. For in whatsoever we are made aware of some ideal of completeness, that becomes significant to us. A grain of sand is nothing to me, but a lotus flower has for me the full force of certitude. Though at every step the sand may obtrude itself on my attention,—grating on my feet, irritating my eye, setting my teeth on edge,—nevertheless it has not for me any fullness of truth. The lotus does not have to elbow its way into my notice, rather does my mind of its own accord go out to greet and welcome it.

PART V

168

There are many paradoxes in the world and one of them is this, that wherever the landscape is immense, the sky unlimited, clouds intimately dense, feelings unfathomable—that is to say, where infinitude is manifest—its fit companion is one solitary person; a multitude there seems so petty, so distracting.

An individual and the infinite are on equal terms, worthy to gaze on one another, each from his own throne. But where many men are, how small both humanity and infinitude become, how much they have to knock off each other, in order to fit in together! Each soul wants so much room to expand that in a crowd it needs must wait for gaps through which to thrust a little craning piece of a head from time to time.

169

The true universal finds its manifestation in the individuality which is true. Beauty is universal, and a rose reveals it because, as a rose, it is individually beautiful. By making a decoction of a rose, jasmine, and lotus, you do not get to a realization of some larger beauty which is interfloral. The true universalism is not the breaking down of the walls of one's own house, but the offering of hospitality to one's guests and neighbours.

170

I am not a scientist, but I believe this material world is built of light; that matter, in its ultimate stage, is Light. Anyhow, the material world has for its source *movement*,—which is the same as light. The sun, the stars,—they are the keepers, the reservoir, of that which gives the planet the inspiration to move and to be moulded into a variety of things. This movement is the response to Light of the light that lives within the boundary of form.

But we know that this world of beauty, goodness, and truth has other qualities besides those of matter. I am inclined to call this the world of

personality. For it is the personal man who is conscious of truth, beauty, and goodness. Not only is he conscious of them, but his personality is strengthened and enriched through a realization of all that is true, good, and beautiful. This world of personality must also have its eternal foundation, just as the material world has for its foundation, light. And it is almost a truism to say that the fundamental light of this world of personality is Love.

171

WHAT IS THE great fact of this age? It is that the messenger of an immense future has come; he has knocked at our gate and all the bars have given way. Our doors have burst open. The human races have come out of their enclosures. They have gathered together.

We have been engaged in cultivating each his own individual life, in the seclusion of our own national workshops. We did not know what was happening outside the walls. We had neither the wisdom nor the opportunity to harmonize our growth with world tendencies. But there are no longer walls to hide us. We have at length to prove our worth to the whole world, not merely to admiring groups of our own people. We must justify our own existence. We must show, each in our own civilization, that which is universal.

172

IN THE NIGHT, we stumble over things and become acutely conscious of their individual separateness, but the day reveals the great unity which embraces them. And the man, whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness, at once realizes the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences of race, and his mind no longer awkwardly stumbles over individual facts of separateness in the human world, accepting them as final; he realizes that peace is in the inner harmony which dwells in truth, and not in any outer adjustments; that beauty carries an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.

173

WHEN THE ARTIST sends his song forth from the depth of a full heart, that is joy indeed. And the joy is redoubled when this same song is wafted back to him as hearer. If, when the creation of the Arch-Poet is thus returning back to him in a flood of joy, we allow it to flow over our consciousness, we at once, immediately, become aware, in an inexpressible manner, of the end of which this flood is streaming. And as we become aware, our love goes forth; and our selves are moved from their moorings and would fain float down the stream of joy to its infinite goal. This is the meaning of the longing which stirs within us at the sight of beauty.

174

ALL THE LANGUAGE of joy is beauty. It is necessary to note, however, that joy is not pleasure, and beauty not mere prettiness. Joy is the outcome of detachment

from self and lives in freedom of spirit. Beauty is that profound expression of reality which satisfies our hearts without any other allurements but its own ultimate value. When in some pure moments of ecstasy we realize this in the world around us, we see the world, not as merely existing, but as decorated in its forms, sounds, colours, and lines; we feel in our hearts that there is One who through all things proclaims, 'I have joy in my creation'.

175

THERE COME IN our history occasions when the consciousness of a large multitude becomes suddenly illumined with the recognition of something which rises far above the triviality of daily happenings. Such an occasion there was when the voice of Buddha reached distant shores across all physical and moral impediments. Then our life and our world found their profound meaning of reality in their relation to the central person who offered us the emancipation of love. And men, in order to make this great human experience ever-memorable, determined to do the impossible; they made rocks to speak, stones to sing, caves to remember; the cry of joy and hope took immortal forms along hills and deserts, across barren solitudes and populous cities. A gigantic creative endeavour built up its triumph in stupendous carvings defying obstacles that were overwhelming. Such a heroic activity over the greater part of the Eastern continent clearly answers the question, *What is art?* It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real.

176

AS ART-CREATIONS are emotional representations of facts and ideas, they can never be like the product of a photographic camera which is passively receptive of lights and shadows in all their indiscriminate details. Our scientific mind is unbiased, it accepts facts with a cold-blooded curiosity that has no preference. The artistic mind is strongly biased, and that bias not only guides it in its fastidious selection of the subject, but also in that of its details. It throws the coloured lights of emphasis on its theme in such a manner that it attains a character which clearly distinguishes it from its fellows. The skylarks of science offer corroboration of their truth through their similarity; the skylarks of artists and poets through their dissimilarity. If Shelley's poem on this bird had been just like that of Wordsworth, it would have been rejected for its lack of truth.

177

MUSIC IS THE most abstract of all arts, as mathematics is in the region of science. In fact, these two have deep relationship with each other. Mathematics as the logic of number and dimension is the basis of our scientific knowledge. When taken out of its concrete associations with cosmic phenomena and reduced to symbols, it reveals its grand structural majesty, the inevitableness of its own perfect concord. But there is also such a thing as the magic of mathematics, which works at the root of all appearances, producing harmony of unity, the cadence of the interrelation of the parts bringing them under the dominion

of the whole. This rhythm of harmony has been extracted from its usual context and exhibited through the medium of sound. And thus the pure essence of expressiveness in existence is offered in music. In sound it finds the least resistance and has a freedom unencumbered by the burden of facts and thoughts. It gives it a power to arouse in us an intense feeling of reality, it seems to lead us into the soul of all things and make us feel the very breath of inspiration flowing from the supreme creative joy.

178

ART REPRESENTS THE inexhaustible magnificence of creative spirit; it is generous in its acceptance and generous in its bestowal; it is unique in its manner and universal in its appeal; it is hospitable to *all* because it has the wealth which is its own; its vision is new though its view may be old; it carries its special criterion of excellence within itself and therefore contemptuously refuses to be browbeaten into conformity with a rhetoric manufactured by those who are not in the secret of the subtle mysteries of creation, who want to simplify through their academic code of law that which is absolutely simple through its spontaneity.

179

CHILDREN ARE LIVING beings—more living than grown-up people, who have built their shells of habit around themselves. Therefore it is absolutely necessary for their mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love. It must be an *āshram* where men have gathered for the highest end of life, in the peace of Nature; where life is not merely meditative, but fully awake in its activities, where boys' minds are not being perpetually drilled into believing that the ideal of the self-idolatry of the nation is the truest ideal for them to accept; where they are bidden to realize man's world as God's Kingdom to whose citizenship they have to aspire; where the sunrise and sunset and the silent glory of stars are not daily ignored; where Nature's festivities of flowers and fruit have their joyous recognition from man; and where the young and the old, the teacher and the student, sit at the same table to take their daily food and the food of their eternal life.

180

PURE JOY IS the children's joy. They have the power of using any and every trivial thing to create their world of interest, and the ugliest doll is made beautiful with their imagination and lives with their life. He who can retain this faculty of enjoyment after he has grown up, is indeed the true Idealist. For him things are not merely visible to the eye or audible to the ear, but they are also sensible to the heart, and their narrownesses and imperfections are lost in the glad music which he himself supplies.

181

I BELIEVE THAT children should be surrounded with the things of Nature which have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble on and be surprised at everything that happens in the life of to-day. The new to-morrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life. This is the best method for the child. But what happens in school is, that everyday at the same hour, the same book is brought and poured out for him. His attention is never hit by the chance surprises which come from learning from Nature.

182

THE INEFFABLE emanation of woman's nature has, from the first, played its part in the creations of man, unobtrusively but inevitably. Had man's mind not been energized by the inner working of woman's vital charm, he would never have attained his successes. Of all the higher achievements of civilization—the devotion of the toiler, the valour of the brave, the creations of the artist,—the secret spring is to be found in woman's influence. In the clash and battle of primitive civilization, the action of woman's *shakti* is not clearly manifest; but as civilization becomes spiritual in the course of its development, and the union of man with man is acknowledged to be more important than the differences between them, the charm of woman gets the opportunity to become the predominant factor. Such spiritual civilization can only be upheld if the emotion of woman and the intellect of man are contributed in mutual shares for its purposes. Then their respective contributions may combine gloriously in ever-fresh creations, and their difference will no longer make for inequality.

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IT SEEMS THAT the subconscious remembrance of some primeval dwelling-place where, in our ancestors' minds, were figured and voiced the mysteries of the inarticulate rocks, the rushing water, and the dark whispers of the forest, is constantly stirring our blood with its call. Some shadow-haunted living reminiscence in me seems to ache for the pre-natal cradle and playground it once shared with the primal life in the illimitable magic of land, water, and air. The thin, shrill cry to the high-flying kite in the blazing sun of a dazed Indian mid-day sent to a solitary boy the signal of a dumb, distant kinship. The few coconut palms growing by the boundary wall of our house, like some war captives from an older army of invaders of this earth, spoke to me of the eternal companionship which the great brotherhood of trees has ever offered to man. They made my heart wistful with the invitation of the forest.

184

OUR GROWN-UP mind is always full of the things we have to arrange and deal with, and therefore the things that happen around us,—the coming of morning, celebrated with music and with flowers—leave no mark upon us. We do not allow them to do so, for our minds are already crowded; the stream of

lessons perpetually flowing from the heart of Nature does not touch us, we merely choose those which are useful, rejecting the rest as undesirable because we want the shortest cut to success.

Children have no such distractions. With them every new fact or event comes to a mind that is always open, with an abundant hospitality; and, through this exuberant, indiscriminate acceptance, they learn innumerable facts within a very short time, amazing compared with our own slowness. These are most important lessons of life, which are thus learnt, and what is still more wonderful is, that the greater part of them are abstract truths. It is even difficult to imagine how it is possible for a child to understand abstract ideas through mere guessing, to master that most complex organism of expression our language, while its mind is so immature.

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MAN, WHO IS provident, feels for that life of his which is not yet existent, feels much more for that than for the life that is with him; therefore he is ready to sacrifice his present inclination for the unrealized future. In this he becomes great, for he realizes truth. Even to be efficiently selfish a man has to recognize this truth, and has to curb his immediate impulses—in other words, has to be moral. For our moral faculty is the faculty by which we know that life is not made up of fragments purposeless and discontinuous. This moral sense of man not only gives him the power to see that the self has a continuity in time, but it also enables him to see that he is not true when he is only restricted to his own self. He is more in truth than he is in fact.

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THE REALIZATION of our soul has its moral and its spiritual side. The moral side represents training of unselfishness, control of desire; the spiritual side represents sympathy and love. They should be taken together and never separated. The cultivation of the merely moral side of our nature leads us to the dark region of narrowness and hardness of heart, to the intolerant arrogance of goodness; and the cultivation of the merely spiritual side of our nature leads us to a still darker region of revelry in intemperance of imagination.

187

RELIGION MUST only deal with things that belong to the spiritual realm of the eternal, and with sentiments that are self-luminous, carrying their ultimate value in themselves. It should allow a great part of human existence to lie outside its direct interference, so that life may enjoy its freedom of growth guided by laws of reason, or rhythm of beauty. The guidance of reason constantly varies its course, in its perpetual process of adjustment with unforeseen circumstances; its scope is ever being widened by contact with new data. But if religion, which is to give us emancipation in the realm of the infinite, tries also to usurp the place of reason in the world of the finite, then it brings about utter stagnation and sterility.

188

RELIGION IS NOT a fractional thing that can be doled out in fixed weekly or daily measures as one among various subjects in the school syllabus. It is the truth of our complete being, the consciousness of our personal relationship with the infinite; it is the true centre of gravity of our life. This we can attain during our childhood by daily living in a place where the truth of the spiritual world is not obscured by a crowd of necessities assuming artificial importance; where life is simple, surrounded by fullness of leisure, by ample space and pure air and profound peace of Nature; and where men live with a perfect faith in the eternal life before them.

189

OUR UNION WITH a Being whose activity is worldwide and who dwells in the heart of humanity cannot be a passive one. In order to be united with Him we have to divest our work of selfishness, we must work for all. When I say for *all*, I do not mean for a countless number of individuals. Work that is morally good, however small in extent, is universal in character. Such work makes for a realization of *Visvakarma*, the World-worker, who works for others. In order to be one with this *Mahatma*[1] one must cultivate the greatness of soul which identifies itself with the soul of all peoples and not merely with that of one's own.

190

YOGA IS FOR the union with the all, which is not the sum total of things, but the truth which dwells in them and beyond them. For the person whose spiritual sense is dull, the desire for realization is reduced to physical possession, an actual grasping in space. His longing for magnitude becomes not an aspiration towards the great, but a mania for the big. But the spiritual realization of the universal which lies along the process of *yoga* is not through augmentation of possession in dimension or number. For unending quantity is merely limit made endless, which is not the same as the unlimited. The truth that is infinite dwells in the ideal of unity, which we find in the deeper relatedness of all things in this world. This truth of relation is not in space, it can only be realized in one's own spirit, because it lies in the spirit of things.

191

THERE ARE circumstances in which the imbibing of religion should be as easy for children as taking breath. But this very taking of breath may be put beyond the doctor's aid by the slightest of obstructions. In fact, if the patient is conscious of an effort in breathing, that itself is a bad sign. It is the same with religion. When spiritual feeling permeates a community, then the religious life is spontaneous; it naturally finds its creative activity and moral expression. The problem of the religious education of the children does not then separately arise, because their subconscious mind grows in an atmosphere rich with the sense of divine presence.

[1] *Lit.*, 'Great Soul'.

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RELIGION HAS ITS genesis in man's desire to be released from the limitation of what *is*. The crudest magical rites, however weird or meaningless they may appear, have in some vague manner this freedom for their object. Man is the only creature who is a born rebel, never reconciled to the conditions of his existence. In the depth of his nature he carries an instinctive faith in the paradox that the completeness of reality consists in the endless contradiction of what *does* exist and what *should* exist. His literature and art find their inspiration in the ever-present suggestions that come from beyond the boundaries of his senses, and yet seem closer to him than the obvious.

The Religion of Man

PREFACE

THE CHAPTERS INCLUDED in this book, which comprises the Hibbert Lectures delivered in Oxford, at Manchester College, during the month of May 1930, contain also the gleanings of my thoughts on the same subject from the harvest of many lectures and addresses delivered in different countries of the world over a considerable period of my life.

The fact that one theme runs through all only proves to me that the Religion of Man has been growing within my mind as a religious experience and not merely as a philosophical subject. In fact, a very large portion of my writings, beginning from the earlier products of my immature youth down to the present time, carry an almost continuous trace of the history of this growth. To-day I am made conscious of the fact that the works that I have started and the words that I have uttered are deeply linked by a unity of inspiration whose proper definition has often remained unrevealed to me.

In the present volume I offer the evidence of my own personal life brought into a definite focus. To some of my readers this will supply matter of psychological interest; but for others I hope it will carry with it its own ideal value important for such a subject as religion.

My sincere thanks are due to the Hibbert Trustees, and especially to Dr. W.H. Drummond, with whom I have been in constant correspondence, for allowing me to postpone the delivery of these Hibbert Lectures from the year 1928, when I was too ill to proceed to Europe, until the summer of 1930. I have also to thank the Trusteees for their very kind permission given to me to present the substance of the lectures in this book in an enlarged form by dividing the whole subject into chapters instead of keeping strictly to the lecture form in which they were delivered in Oxford. May I add that the great kindness of my hostess, Mrs. Drummond, in Oxford, will always remain in my memory along with these lectures as intimately associated with them?

In the Appendix I have gathered together from my own writings certain parallel passages which bring the reader to the heart of my main theme. Furthermore, two extracts, which contain historical material of great value, are from the pen of my esteemed colleague and friend, Professor Kshiti Mohan Sen. To him I would express my gratitude for the help he has given me in bringing before me the religious ideas of medieval India which touch the subject of my lectures.

September 1930 RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The eternal Dream
    is borne on the wings of ageless Light
    that rends the veil of the vague
        and goes across time
    weaving ceaseless patterns of Being.

The mystery remains dumb,
    the meaning of this pilgrimage,
    the endless adventure of existence
whose rush along the sky
    flames up into innumerable rings of paths,
till at last knowledge gleams out from the dusk
        in the infinity of human spirit,
    and in that dim lighted dawn
    she speechlessly gazes through the break in the mist
        at the vision of Life and of Love
    rising from the tumult of profound pain and joy.

Santiniketan
16 September 1929

[*Composed for the Opening Day Celebrations of the Indian College, Montpelier, France.*]

CHAPTER I

MAN'S UNIVERSE

LIGHT, AS THE radiant energy of creation, started the ring-dance of atoms in a diminutive sky, and also the dance of the stars in the vast, lonely theatre of time and space. The planets came out of their bath of fire and basked in the sun for ages. They were the thrones of the gigantic Inert, dumb and desolate, which knew not the meaning of its own blind destiny and majestically frowned upon a future when its monarchy would be menaced.

Then came a time when life was brought into the arena in the tiniest little monocycle of a cell. With its gift of growth and power of adaptation it faced the ponderous enormity of things, and contradicted the unmeaningness of their bulk. It was made conscious not of the volume but of the value of existence, which it ever tried to enhance and maintain in many-branched paths of creation, overcoming the obstructive inertia of Nature by obeying Nature's law.

But the miracle of creation did not stop here in this isolated speck of life launched on a lonely voyage to the Unknown. A multitude of cells were bound together into a larger unit, not through aggregation, but through a marvellous quality of complex inter-relationship maintaining a perfect co-ordination of functions. This is the creative principle of unity, the divine mystery of existence, that baffles all analysis. The larger co-operative units could adequately pay for a greater freedom of self-expression, and they began to form and develop in their bodies new organs of power, new instruments of efficiency. This was the march of evolution ever unfolding the potentialities of life.

But this evolution which continues on the physical plane has its limited range. All exaggeration in that direction becomes a burden that breaks the natural rhythm of life, and those creatures that encouraged their ambitious flesh to grow in dimensions have nearly all perished of their cumbrous absurdity.

Before the chapter ended Man appeared and turned the course of this evolution from an indefinite march of physical aggrandizement to a freedom of a more subtle perfection. This has made possible his progress to become unlimited, and has enabled him to realize the boundless in his power.

The fire is lighted, the hammers are working, and for laborious days and nights amidst dirt and discordance the musical instrument is being made. We may accept this as a detached fact and follow its evolution. But when the music is revealed, we know that the whole thing is a part of the manifestation of music in spite of its contradictory character. The process of evolution, which after ages has reached man, must be realized in its unity with him; though in him it assumes a new value and proceeds to a different path. It is a continuous process that finds its meaning in Man; and we must acknowledge that the evolution which Science talks of is that of Man's universe. The leather binding and title-page are parts of the book itself; and this world that we perceive through our senses and mind and life's experience is profoundly one with ourselves.

The divine principle of unity has ever been that of an inner interrelationship. This is revealed in some of its earliest stages in the evolution of multicellular life on this planet. The most perfect inward expression has been attained by man in his own body. But what is most important of all is the fact that man has also attained its realization in a more subtle body outside his physical system. He misses himself when isolated; he finds his own larger and truer self in his wide human relationship. His multicellular body is born and it dies; his multi-personal humanity is immortal. In this ideal of unity he realizes the eternal in his life and the boundless in his love. The unity becomes not a mere subjective idea, but an energizing truth. Whatever name may be given to it, and whatever form it symbolizes, the consciousness of this unity is spiritual, and our effort to be true to it is our religion. It ever waits to be revealed in our history in a more and more perfect illumination.

We have our eyes, which relate to us the vision of the physical universe. We have also an inner faculty of our own which helps us to find our relationship with the supreme self of man, the universe of personality. This faculty is our luminous imagination, which in its higher stage is special to man. It offers us that vision of wholeness which for the biological necessity of physical survival is superfluous; its purpose is to arouse in us the sense of perfection which is our true sense of immortality. For perfection dwells ideally in Man the Eternal, inspiring love for this ideal in the individual, urging him more and more to realize it.

The development of intelligence and physical power is equally necessary in animals and men for their purposes of living; but what is unique in man is the development of his consciousness which gradually deepens and widens the realization of his immortal being, the perfect, the eternal. It inspires those creations of his that reveal the divinity in him—which is his humanity—in the varied manifestations of truth, goodness and beauty, in the freedom of activity which is not for his use but for his ultimate expression. The individual man must exist for Man the great, and must express him in disinterested works, in science and philosophy, in literature and arts, in service and worship. This is his religion, which is working in the heart of all his religions in various names and forms. He knows and uses this world where it is endless and thus attains greatness, but he realizes his own truth where it is perfect and thus finds his fulfilment.

The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man the Eternal, is the main subject of this book. This thought of God has not grown in my mind through any process of philosophical reasoning. On the contrary, it has followed the current of my temperament from early days until it suddenly flashed into my consciousness with a direct vision. The experience which I have described in one of the chapters which follow convinced me that on the surface of our being we have the ever-changing phases of the individual self, but in the depth there dwells the Eternal Spirit of human unity beyond our direct knowledge. It very often contradicts the trivialities of our daily life, and upsets the arrangements made for securing our personal exclusiveness behind

the walls of individual habits and superficial conventions. It inspires in us works that are the expressions of a Universal Spirit; it invokes unexpectedly in the midst of a self-centred life a supreme sacrifice. At its call, we hasten to dedicate our lives to the cause of truth and beauty, to unrewarded service of others, in spite of our lack of faith in the positive reality of the ideal values.

During the discussion of my own religious experience I have expressed my belief that the first stage of my realization was through my feeling of intimacy with Nature—not that Nature which has its channel of information for our mind and physical relationship with our living body, but that which satisfies our personality with manifestations that make our life rich and stimulate our imagination in their harmony of forms, colours, sounds and movements. It is not that world which vanishes into abstract symbols behind its own testimony to Science, but that which lavishly displays its wealth of reality to our personal self having its own perpetual reaction upon our human nature.

I have mentioned in connection with my personal experience some songs which I had often heard from wandering village singers, belonging to a popular sect of Bengal, called Baūls,[1] who have no images, temples, scriptures, or ceremonials, who declare in their songs the divinity of Man, and express for him an intense feeling of love. Coming from men who are unsophisticated, living a simple life in obscurity, it gives us a clue to the inner meaning of all religions. For it suggests that these religions are never about a God of cosmic force, but rather about the God of human personality.

At the same time it must be admitted that even the impersonal aspect of truth dealt with by Science belongs to the human Universe. But men of Science tell us that truth, unlike beauty and goodness, is independent of our consciousness. They explain to us how the belief that truth is independent of the human mind is a mystical belief, natural to man but at the same time inexplicable. But may not the explanation be this, that ideal truth does not depend upon the individual mind of man, but on the universal mind which comprehends the individual? For to say that truth, as we see it, exists apart from humanity is really to contradict Science itself; because Science can only organize into rational concepts those facts which man can know and understand, and logic is a machinery of thinking created by the mechanic man.

The table that I am using with all its varied meanings appears as a table for man through his special organ of senses and his special organ of thoughts. When scientifically analysed the same table offers an enormously different appearance to him from that given by his senses. The evidence of his physical senses and that of his logic and his scientific instruments are both related to his own power of comprehension; both are true and true for him. He makes use of the table with full confidence for his physical purposes, and with equal confidence makes intellectual use of it for his scientific knowledge. But the knowledge is his who is a man. If a particular man as an individual did not exist, the table would exist all the same, but still as a thing that is related to the human mind. The contradiction that there is between the table of our sense

[1] See Appendix I.

perception and the table of our scientific knowledge has its common centre of reconciliation in human personality.

The same thing holds true in the realm of idea. In the scientific idea of the world there is no gap in the universal law of causality. Whatever happens could never have happened otherwise. This is a generalization which has been made possible by a quality of logic which is possessed by the human mind. But this very mind of Man has its immediate consciousness of will within him which *is* aware of its freedom and ever struggles for it. Every day in most of our behaviour we acknowledge its truth; in fact, our conduct finds its best value in its relation to its truth. Thus this has its analogy in our daily behaviour with regard to a table. For whatever may be the conclusion that Science has unquestionably proved about the table, we are amply rewarded when we deal with it as a solid fact and never as a crowd of fluid elements that represent a certain kind of energy. We can also utilize this phenomenon of the measurement. The space represented by a needle when magnified by the microscope may cause us no anxiety as to the number of angels who could be accommodated on its point or camels which could walk through its eye. In a cinema-picture our vision of time and space can be expanded or condensed merely according to the different technique of the instrument. A seed carries packed in a minute receptacle a future which is enormous in its contents both in time and space. The truth, which is Man, has not emerged out of nothing at a certain point of time, even though seemingly it might have been manifested then. But the manifestation of Man has no end in itself—not even now. Neither did it have its beginning in any particular time we ascribe to it. The truth of Man is in the heart of eternity, the fact of it being evolved through endless ages. If Man's manifestation has round it a background of millions of light-years, still it is his own background. He includes in himself the time, however long, that carries the process of his becoming, and he is related for the very truth of his existence to all things that surround him.

Relationship is the fundamental truth of this world of appearance. Take, for instance, a piece of coal. When we pursue the fact of it to its ultimate composition, substance which seemingly is the most stable element in it vanishes in centres of revolving forces. These are the units, called the elements of carbon, which can further be analysed into a certain number of protons and electrons. Yet these electrical facts are what they are, not in their detachment, but in their inter-relationship, and though possibly some day they themselves may be further analysed, nevertheless the pervasive truth of inter-relation which is manifested in them will remain.

We do not know how these elements, as carbon, compose a piece of coal; all that we can say is that they build up that appearance through a unity of inter-relationship, which unites them not merely in an individual piece of coal, but in a comradeship of creative co-ordination with the entire physical universe.

Creation has been made possible through the continual self-surrender of the unit to the universe. And the spiritual universe of Man is also ever claiming self-renunciation from the individual units. This spiritual process is

not so easy as the physical one in the physical world, for the intelligence and will of the units have to be tempered to those of the universal spirit.

It is said in a verse of the Upanishad that this world which is all movement is pervaded by one supreme unity, and therefore true enjoyment can never be had through the satisfaction of greed, but only through the surrender of our individual self to the Universal Self.

There are thinkers who advocate the doctrine of the plurality of worlds, which can only mean that there are worlds that are absolutely unrelated to each other. Even if this were true it could never be proved. For our universe is the sum total of what Man feels, knows, imagines, reasons to be, and of whatever is knowable to him now or in another time. It affects him differently in its different aspects, in its beauty, its inevitable sequence of happenings, its potentiality; and the world proves itself to him only in its varied effects upon his senses, imagination and reasoning mind.

I do not imply that the final nature of the world depends upon the comprehension of the individual person. Its reality is associated with the universal human mind which comprehends all time and all possibilities of realization. And this is why for the accurate knowledge of things we depend upon Science that represents the rational mind of the universal Man, and not upon that of the individual who dwells in a limited range of space and time and the immediate needs of life. And this is why there is such a thing as progress in our civilization; for progress means that there is an ideal perfection which the individual seeks to reach by extending his limits in knowledge, power, love, enjoyment, thus approaching the universal. The most distant star, whose faint message touches the threshold of the most powerful telescopic vision, has its sympathy with the understanding mind of man, and therefore we can never cease to believe that we shall probe further and further into the mystery of their nature. As we know the truth of the stars we know the great comprehensive mind of man.

We must realize not only the reasoning mind, but also the creative imagination, the love and wisdom that belong to the Supreme Person, whose Spirit is over us all, love for whom comprehends love for all creatures and exceeds in depth and strength all other loves, leading to difficult endeavours and martyrdoms that have no other gain than the fulfilment of this love itself.

The *Isha* of our Upanishad, the Super Soul, which permeates all moving things, is the God of this human universe whose mind we share in all our true knowledge, love and service, and whom to reveal in ourselves through renunciation of self is the highest end of life.

CHAPTER II

THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

ONCE, DURING THE improvisation of a story by a young child, I was coaxed to take my part as the hero. The child imagined that I had been shut in a dark room locked from the outside. She asked me, 'What will you do for your freedom?' and I answered, 'Shout for help'. But, however desirable that might be if it succeeded immediately, it would be unfortunate for the story. And thus she in her imagination had to clear the neighbourhood of all kinds of help that my cries might reach. I was compelled to think of some violent means of kicking through this passive resistance; but for the sake of the story the door had to be made of steel. I found a key, but it would not fit, and the child was delighted at the development of the story jumping over obstructions.

Life's story of evolution, the main subject of which is the opening of the doors of the dark dungeon, seems to develop in the same manner. Difficulties were created, and at each offer of an answer the story had to discover further obstacles in order to carry on the adventure. For to come to an absolutely satisfactory conclusion is to come to the end of all things, and in that case the great child would have nothing else to do but to shut her curtain and go to sleep.

The Spirit of Life began her chapter by introducing a simple living cell against the tremendously powerful challenge of the vast Inert. The triumph was thrillingly great which still refuses to yield its secret. She did not stop there, but defiantly courted difficulties, and in the technique of her art exploited an element which still baffles our logic.

This is the harmony of self-adjusting inter-relationship impossible to analyse. She brought close together numerous cell units and, by grouping them into a self-sustaining sphere of co-operation, elaborated a larger unit. It was not a mere agglomeration. The grouping had its caste system in the division of functions and yet an intimate unity of kinship. The creative life summoned a larger army of cells under her command and imparted into them, let us say, a communal spirit that fought with all its might whenever its integrity was menaced.

This was the tree which has its inner harmony and inner movement of life in its beauty, its strength, its sublime dignity of endurance, its pilgrimage to the Unknown through the tiniest gates of reincarnation. It was a sufficiently marvellous achievement to be a fit termination to the creative venture. But the creative genius cannot stop exhausted; more windows have to be opened; and she went out of her accustomed way and brought another factor into her work, that of locomotion. Risks of living were enhanced, offering opportunities to the daring resourcefulness of the Spirit of Life. For she seems to revel in occasions for a fight against the giant Matter, which has rigidly prohibitory immigration laws against all new-comers from Life's shore. So the fish was furnished with appliances for moving in an element which offered its density

for an obstacle. The air offered an even more difficult obstacle in its lightness; but the challenge was accepted, and the bird was gifted with a marvellous pair of wings that negotiated with the subtle laws of the air and found in it a better ally than the reliable soil of the stable earth. The Arctic snow set up its frigid sentinel; the tropical desert uttered in its scorching breath a gigantic 'No' against all life's children. But those peremptory prohibitions were defied, and the frontiers, though guarded by a death penalty, were triumphantly crossed.

This process of conquest could be described as progress for the kingdom of life. It journeyed on through one success to another by dealing with the laws of Nature through the help of the invention of new instruments. This field of life's onward march is a field of ruthless competition. Because the material world is the world of quantity, where resources are limited and victory waits for those who have superior facility in their weapons, therefore success in the path of progress for one group most often runs parallel to defeat in another.

It appears that such scramble and fight for opportunities of living among numerous small combatants suggested at last an imperialism of big bulky flesh—a huge system of muscles and bones, thick and heavy coats of armour and enormous tails. The idea of such indecorous massiveness must have seemed natural to life's providence; for the victory in the world of quantity might reasonably appear to depend upon the bigness of dimension. But such gigantic paraphernalia of defence and attack resulted in an utter defeat, the records of which every day are being dug up from the desert sands and ancient mud flats. These represent the fragments that strew the forgotten paths of a great retreat in the battle of existence. For the heavy weight which these creatures carried was mainly composed of bones, hides, shells, teeth and claws that were non-living, and therefore imposed its whole huge pressure upon life that needed freedom and growth for the perfect expression of its own vital nature. The resources for living which the earth offered for her children were recklessly spent by these megalomaniac monsters of an immoderate appetite for the sake of maintaining a cumbersome system of dead burdens that thwarted them in their true progress. Such a losing game has now become obsolete. To the few stragglers of that party, like the rhinoceros or the hippopotamus, has been allotted a very small space on this earth, absurdly inadequate to their formidable strength and magnitude of proportions, making them look forlornly pathetic in the sublimity of their incongruousness. These and their extinct forerunners have been the biggest failures in life's experiments. And then, on some obscure dusk of dawn, the experiment entered upon a completely new phase of a disarmament proposal, when little Man made his appearance in the arena, bringing with him expectations and suggestions that are unfathomably great.

We must know that the evolution process of the world has made its progress towards the revelation of its *truth*—that is to say some inner value which is not in the extension in space and duration in time. When life came out it did not bring with it any new materials into existence. Its elements are the same which are the materials for the rocks and minerals. Only it evolved

a value in them which cannot be measured and analysed. The same thing is true with regard to mind and the consciousness of self; they are revelations of a great meaning, the self-expression of a truth. In man this truth has made its positive appearance, and is struggling to make its manifestation more and more clear. That which is eternal is realizing itself in history through the obstructions of limits.

The physiological process in the progress of Life's evolution seems to have reached its finality in man. We cannot think of any noticeable addition or modification in our vital instruments which we are likely to allow to persist. If any individual is born,by chance, with an extra pair of eyes or ears, or some unexpected limbs like stowaways without passports, we are sure to do our best to eliminate them from our bodily organization. Any new chance of a too obviously physical variation is certain to meet with a determined disapproval from man, the most powerful veto being expected from his aesthetic nature, which peremptorily refuses to calculate advantage when its majesty is offended by any sudden license of form. We all know that the back of our body has a wide surface practically unguarded. From the strategic point of view this oversight is unfortunate, causing us annoyances and indignities, if nothing worse, through unwelcome intrusions. And this could reasonably justify in our minds regret for retrenchment in the matter of an original tail, whose memorial we are still made to carry in secret. But the least attempt at the rectification of the policy of economy in this direction is indignantly resented. I strongly believe that the idea of ghosts had its best chance with our timid imagination in our sensitive back—a field of dark ignorance; and yet it is too late for me to hint that one of our eyes could profitably have been spared for our burden-carrier back, so unjustly neglected and haunted by undefined fears.

Thus, while all innovation is stubbornly opposed, there is every sign of a comparative carelessness about the physiological efficiency of the human body. Some of our organs are losing their original vigour. The civilized life, within walked enclosures, has naturally caused in man a weakening of his power of sight and hearing along with subtle sense of the distant. Because of our habit of taking cooked food we give less employment to our teeth and a great deal more to the dentist. Spoilt and pampered by clothes, our skin shows lethargy in its function of adjustment to the atmospheric temperature and in its power of quick recovery from hurts.

The adventurous Life appears to have paused at a crossing in her road before Man came. It seems as if she became aware of wastefulness in carrying on her experiments and adding to her inventions purely on the physical plane. It was proved in Life's case that four is not always twice as much as two. In living things it is necessary to keep to the limit of the perfect unit within which the inter-relationship must not be inordinately strained. The ambition that seeks power in the augmentation of dimension is doomed for that perfection which is in the inner quality of harmony becomes choked when quantity overwhelms it in a fury of extravagance. The combination of an exaggerated nose and arm that an elephant carries hanging down its front has

its advantage. This may induce us to imagine that it would double the advantage for the animal if its tail also could grow into an additional trunk. But the progress which greedily allows Life's field to be crowded with an excessive production of instruments becomes a progress towards death. For Life has its own natural rhythm which a multiplication table has not; and proud progress that rides roughshod over Life's cadence kills it at the end with encumbrances that are unrhythmic. As I have already mentioned, such disasters did happen in the history of evolution.

The moral of that tragic chapter is that if the tail does not have the decency to know where to stop, the drag of this dependency becomes fatal to the body's empire.

Moreover, evolutionary progress on the physical plane inevitably tends to train up its subjects into specialists. The camel is a specialist of the desert and is awkward in the swamp. The hippopotamus which specializes in the mudlands of the Nile is helpless in the neighbouring desert. Such one-sided emphasis breeds professionalism in Life's domain, confining special efficiencies in narrow compartments. The expert training in the aerial sphere is left to the bird; that in the marine is particularly monopolized by the fish. The ostrich is an expert in its own region and would look utterly foolish in an eagle's neighbourhood. They have to remain permanently content with advantages that desperately cling to their limits. Such mutilation of the complete ideal of life for the sake of some exclusive privilege of power is inevitable; for that form of progress deals with materials that are physical and therefore necessarily limited.

To rescue her own career from such a multiplying burden of the dead and such constriction of specialization seems to have been the object of the Spirit of Life at one particular stage. For it does not take long to find out that an indefinite pursuit of quantity creates for Life, which is essentially qualitative, complexities that lead to a vicious circle. These primeval animals that produced an enormous volume of flesh had to build a gigantic system of bones to carry the burden. This required in its turn a long and substantial array of tails to give it balance. Thus their bodies, being compelled to occupy a vast area, exposed a very large surface which had to be protected by a strong, heavy and capacious armour. A progress which represented a congress of dead materials required a parallel organization of teeth and claws, or horns and hooves, which also were dead.

In its own manner one mechanical burden links itself to other burdens of machines, and Life grows to be a carrier of the dead, a mere platform for machinery, until it is crushed to death by its interminable paradoxes. We are told that the greater part of a tree is dead matter; the big stem, except for a thin covering, is lifeless. The tree uses it as a prop in its ambition for a high position and the lifeless timber is the slave that carries on its back the magnitude of the tree. But such a dependence upon a dead dependant has been achieved by the tree at the cost of its real freedom. It had to seek the stable alliance of the earth for the sharing of its burden, which it did by the help of secret underground entanglements making itself permanently stationary.

But the form of life that seeks the great privilege of movement must minimize its load of the dead and must realize that life's progress should be a perfect progress of the inner life itself and not of materials and machinery; the non-living must not continue outgrowing the living, the armour deadening the skin, the armament laming the arms.

At last, when the Spirit of Life found her form in Man, the effort she had begun completed its cycle, and the truth of her mission glimmered into suggestions which dimly pointed to some direction of meaning across her own frontier. Before the end of this cycle was reached, all the suggestions had been external. They were concerned with technique, with life's apparatus, with the efficiency of the organs. This might have exaggerated itself into an endless boredom of physical progress. It can be conceded that the eyes of the bee possessing numerous facets may have some uncommon advantage which we cannot even imagine, or the glow-worm that carries an arrangement for producing light in its person may baffle our capacity and comprehension. Very likely there are creatures having certain organs that give them sensibilities which we cannot have the power to guess.

All such enhanced sensory powers merely add to the mileage in life's journey on the same road lengthening an indefinite distance. They never take us over the border of physical existence.

The same thing may be said not only about life's efficiency, but also life's ornaments. The colouring and decorative patterns on the bodies of some of the deep sea creatures make us silent with amazement. The butterfly's wings, the beetle's back, the peacock's plumes, the shells of the crustaceans, the exuberant outbreak of decoration in plant life, have reached a standard of perfection that seems to be final. And yet if it continues in the same physical direction, then, however much variety of surprising excellence it may produce, it leaves out some great element of unuttered meaning. These ornaments are like ornaments lavished upon a captive girl, luxuriously complete within a narrow limit, speaking of a homesickness for a far away horizon of emancipation, for an inner depth that is beyond the ken of the senses. The freedom in the physical realm is like the circumscribed freedom in a cage. It produces a proficiency which is mechanical and a beauty which is of the surface. To whatever degree of improvement bodily strength and skill may be developed they keep life tied to a persistence of habit. It is closed, like a mould, useful though it may be for the sake of safety and precisely standardized productions. For centuries the bee repeats its hive, the weaver-bird its nest, the spider its web; and instincts strongly attach themselves to some invariable tendencies of muscles and nerves never being allowed the privilege of making blunders. The physical functions, in order to be strictly reliable, behave like some model schoolboy, obedient, regular, properly repeating lessons by rote without mischief or mistake in his conduct, but also without spirit and initiative. It is the flawless perfection of rigid limits, a cousin—possibly a distant cousin—of the inanimate.

Instead of allowing a full paradise of perfection to continue its tame and

timid rule of faultless regularity the Spirit of Life boldly declared for a further freedom and decided to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. This time her struggle was not against the Inert, but against the limitation of her own overburdened agents. She fought against the tutelage of her prudent old prime minister, the faithful instinct. She adopted a novel method of experiment, promulgated new laws, and tried her hand at moulding Man through a history which was immensely different from that which went before. She took a bold step in throwing open her gates to a dangerously explosive factor which she had cautiously introduced into her council—the element of Mind. I should not say that it was ever absent, but only that at a certain stage some curtain was removed and its play was made evident, even like the dark heat which in its glowing intensity reveals itself in a contradiction of radiancy.

Essentially qualitative, like life itself, the Mind does not occupy space. For that very reason it has no bounds in its mastery of space. Also, like Life, Mind has its meaning in freedom, which it missed in its earliest dealings with Life's children. In the animal, though the mind is allowed to come out of the immediate limits of livelihood, its range is restricted, like the freedom of a child that might run out of its room but not out of the house; or, rather, like the foreign ships to which only a certain port was opened in Japan in the beginning of her contact with the West in fear of the danger that might befall if the strangers had their uncontrolled opportunity of communication. Mind also is a foreign element for Life; its laws are different, its weapons powerful, its moods and manners most alien.

Like Eve of the Semitic mythology, the Spirit of Life risked the happiness of her placid seclusion to win her freedom. She listened to the whisper of a temper who promised her the right to a new region of mystery, and was urged into a permanent alliance with the stranger. Up to this point the interest of life was the sole interest in her own kingdom, but another most powerfully parallel interest was created with the advent of this adventurer Mind from an unknown shore. Their interests clash, and complications of a serious nature arise. I have already referred to some vital organs of Man that are suffering from neglect. The only reason has been the diversion created by the Mind interrupting the sole attention which Life's functions claimed in the halcyon days of her undisputed monarchy. It is no secret that Mind has the habit of asserting its own will for its expression against life's will to live and enforcing sacrifices from her. When lately some adventurers accepted the dangerous enterprise to climb Mount Everest, it was solely through the instigation of the arch-rebel Mind. In this case Mind denied its treaty of cooperation with its partner and ignored Life's claim to help in her living. The immemorial privileges of the ancient sovereignty of Life are too often flouted by the irreverent Mind; in fact, all through the course of this alliance there are constant cases of interference with each other's functions, often with unpleasant and even fatal results. But in spite of this, or very often because of this antagonism, the new current of Man's evolution is bringing a wealth to his harbour infinitely beyond the dream of the creatures of monstrous flesh.

The manner in which Man appeared in Life's kingdom was in itself a protest and a challenge, the challenge of Jack to the Giant. He carried in his body the declaration of mistrust against the crowding of burdensome implements of physical progress. His Mind spoke to the naked man, 'Fear not'; and he stood alone facing the menace of a heavy brigade of formidable muscles. His own puny muscles cried out in despair, and he had to invent for himself in a novel manner and in a new spirit of evolution. This at once gave him his promotion from the passive destiny of the animal to the aristocracy of Man. He began to create his further body, his outer organs—the workers which served him and yet did not directly claim a share of his life. Some of the earliest in his list were bows and arrows. Had this change been undertaken by the physical process of evolution, modifying his arms in a slow and gradual manner, it might have resulted in burdensome and ungainly apparatus. Possibly, however, I am unfair, and the dexterity and grace which Life's technical instinct possesses might have changed his arm into a shooting medium in a perfect manner and with a beautiful form. In that case our lyrical literature to-day would have sung in praise of its fascination, not only for a consummate skill in hunting victims, but also for a similar mischief in a metaphorical sense. But even in the service of lyrics it would show some limitation. For instance, the arms that would specialize in shooting would be awkward in wielding a pen or stringing a lute. But the great advantage in the latest method of human evolution lies in the fact that Man's additional new limbs, like bows and arrows, have become detached. They never tie his arms to any exclusive advantage of efficiency.

The elephant's trunk, the tiger's paws, the claws of the mole, have combined their best expressions in the human arms, which are much weaker in their original capacity than those limbs I have mentioned. It would have been a hugely cumbersome practical joke if the combination of animal limbs had had a simultaneous location in the human organism through some overzeal in biological inventiveness.

The first great economy resulting from the new programme was the relief of the physical burden, which means the maximum efficiency with the minimum pressure of taxation upon the vital resources of the body. Another mission of benefit was this, that it absolved the Spirit of Life in Man's case from the necessity of specialization for the sake of limited success. This has encouraged Man to dream of the possibility of combining in his single person the fish, the bird and the fleet-footed animal that walks on land. Man desired in his completeness to be the one great representative of multiform life, not through wearisome subjection to the haphazard gropings of natural selection, but by the purposeful selection of opportunities with the help of his reasoning mind. It enables the schoolboy who is given a pen-knife on his birthday to have the advantage over the tiger in the fact that it does not take him a million years to obtain its possession, nor another million years for its removal, when the instrument proves unnecessary or dangerous. The human mind has compressed ages into a few years for the acquisition of steel-made claws. The only cause of

anxiety is that the instrument and the temperament which uses it may not keep pace in perfect harmony. In the tiger, the claws and the temperament which only a tiger should possess have had a synchronous development, and in no single tiger is any maladjustment possible between its nails and its tigerliness. But the human boy, who grows a claw in the form of a pen-knife, may not at the same time develop the proper temperament necessary for its use which only a man ought to have. The new organs that to-day are being added as a supplement to Man's original vital stock are too quick and too numerous for his inner nature to develop its own simultaneous concordance with them, and thus we see everywhere innumerable schoolboys in human society playing pranks with their own and other people's lives and welfare by means of newly acquired pen-knives which have not had time to become humanized.

One thing, I am sure, must have been noticed—that the original plot of the drama is changed, and the mother Spirit of Life has retired into the background, giving full prominence, in the third act, to the Spirit of Man—though the dowager queen, from her inner apartment, still renders necessary help. It is the consciousness in Man of his own creative personality which has ushered in this new regime in Life's kingdom. And from now onwards Man's attempts are directed fully to capture the government and make his own Code of Legislation prevail without a break. We have seen in India those who are called mystics, impatient of the continued regency of mother Nature in their own body, winning for their will by a concentration of inner forces the vital regions with which our masterful minds have no direct path of communication.

But the most important fact that has come into prominence along with the change of direction in our evolution, is the possession of a Spirit which has its enormous capital with a surplus far in excess of the requirements of the biological animal in Man. Some overflowing influence led us over the strict boundaries of living, and offered to us an open space where Man's thoughts and dreams could have their holidays. Holidays are for gods who have their joy in creation. In Life's primitive paradise, where the mission was merely to live, any luck which came to the creatures entered in from outside by the donations of chance; they lived on perpetual charity, by turns petted and kicked on the back by physical Providence. Beggars never can have harmony among themselves; they are envious of one another, mutually suspicious, like dogs living upon their master's favour, showing their teeth, growling, barking, trying to tear one another. This is what Science describes as the struggle for existence. This beggar's paradise lacked peace; I am sure the suitors for special favour from fate lived in constant preparedness, inventing and multiplying armaments.

But above the din of the clamour and scramble rises the voice of the Angel of Surplus, of leisure, of detachment from the compelling claim of physical need, saying to men, 'Rejoice'. From his original serfdom as a creature Man takes his right seat as a creator. Whereas, before,his incessant appeal has been to get, now at last the call comes to him to give. His God, whose

help he was in the habit of asking, now stands Himself at his door and asks for his offerings. As an animal, he is still dependent upon Nature; as a Man, he is a sovereign who builds his world and rules it.

And there, at this point, comes his religion, whereby he realizes himself in the perspective of the infinite. There is a remarkable verse in the Atharva Veda which says: 'Righteousness, truth, great endeavours, empire, religion, enterprise, heroism and prosperity, the past and the future, dwell in the surpassing strength of the surplus.'

What is purely physical has its limits like the shell of an egg; the liberation is there in the atmosphere of the infinite, which is indefinable, invisible. Religion can have no meaning in the enclosure of mere physical or material interest; it is in the surplus we carry around our personality—the surplus which is like the atmosphere of the earth, bringing to her a constant circulation of light and life and delightfulness.

I have said in a poem of mine that when the child is detached from its mother's womb it finds its mother in a real relationship whose truth is in freedom. Man in his detachment has realized himself in a wider and deeper relationship with the universe. In his moral life he has the sense of his obligation and his freedom at the same time, and this is goodness. In his spiritual life his sense of the union and the will which is free has its culmination in love. The freedom of opportunity he wins for himself in Nature's region by uniting his power with Nature's forces. The freedom of social relationship he attains through owning responsibility to his community, thus gaining its collective power for his own welfare. In the freedom of consciousness he realizes the sense of his unity with his larger being, finding fulfilment in the dedicated life of an ever-progressive truth and ever-active love.

The first detachment achieved by Man is physical. It represents his freedom from the necessity of developing the power of his senses and limbs in the limited area of his own physiology, having for itself an unbounded background with an immense result in consequence. Nature's original intention was that Man should have the allowance of his sight-power ample enough for his surroundings and a little over. But to have to develop an astronomical telescope on our skull would cause a worse crisis of bankruptcy than it did to the Mammoth whose densely foolish body indulged in an extravagance of tusks. A snail carries its house on its back and therefore the material, the shape and the weight have to be strictly limited to the capacity of the body. But fortunately Man's house need not grow on the foundation of his bones and occupy his flesh. Owing to this detachment, his ambition knows no check to its daring in the dimension and strength of his dwellings. Since his shelter does not depend upon his body, it survives him. This fact greatly affects the man who builds a house, generating in his mind a sense of the eternal in his creative work. And this background of the boundless surplus of time encourages architecture, which seeks a universal value overcoming the miserliness of the present need.

I have already mentioned a stage which Life reached when the units of

single cells formed themselves into larger units, each consisting of a multitude. It was not merely an aggregation, but had a mysterious unity of interrelationship, complex in character, with differences within of forms and function. We can never know concretely what this relation means. There are gaps between the units, but they do not stop the binding force that permeates the whole. There is a future for the whole which is in its growth, but in order to bring this about each unit works and dies to make room for the next worker. While the unit has the right to claim the glory of the whole, yet individually it cannot share the entire wealth that occupies a history yet to be completed.

Of all creatures Man has reached that multicellular character in a perfect manner, not only in his body but in his personality. For centuries his evolution has been the evolution of a consciousness that tries to be liberated from the bonds of individual separateness and to comprehend in its relationship a wholeness which may be named Man. This relationship, which has been dimly instinctive, is ever struggling to be fully aware of itself. Physical evolution sought for efficiency in a perfect communication with the physical world; the evolution of Man's consciousness sought for truth in a perfect harmony with the world of personality.

There are those who will say that the idea of humanity is an abstraction, subjective in character. It must be confessed that the concrete objectiveness of this living truth cannot be proved to its own units. They can never see its entireness from outside; for they are one with it. The individual cells of our body have their separate lives; but they never have the opportunity of observing the body as a whole with its past, present and future. If these cells have the power of reasoning (which they may have for aught we know) they have the right to argue that the idea of the body has no objective foundation in fact, and though there is a mysterious sense of attraction and mutual influence running through them, these are nothing positively real; the sole reality which is provable is in the isolation of these cells made by gaps that can never be crossed or bridged.

We know something about a system of explosive atoms whirling separately in a space which is immense compared to their own dimension. Yet we do not know why they should appear to us a solid piece of radiant mineral. And if there is an onlooker who at one glance can have the view of the immense time and space occupied by innumerable human individuals engaged in evolving a common history, the positive truth of their solidarity will be concretely evident to him and not the negative fact of their separateness.

The reality of a piece of iron is not provable if we take the evidence of the atom; the only proof is that I see it as a bit of iron, and that it has certain reactions upon my consciousness. Any being from, say, Orion, who has the sight to see the atoms and not the iron, has the right to say that we human beings suffer from an age-long epidemic of hallucination. We need not quarrel with him but go on using the iron as it appears to us. Seers there have been who have said *Vēdāhamētam*, 'I see', and lived a life according to that vision. And though our own sight may be blind we have ever bowed our head to them in reverence.

However, whatever name our logic may give to the truth of human unity, the fact can never be ignored that we have our greatest delight when we realize ourselves in others, and this is the definition of love. This love gives us the testimony of the great whole, which is the complete and final truth of man. It offers us the immense field where we can have our release from the sole monarchy of hunger, of the growling voice, snarling teeth and tearing claws, from the dominance of the limited material means, the source of cruel envy and ignoble deception, where the largest wealth of the human soul has been produced through sympathy and co-operation; through disinterested pursuit of knowledge that recognizes no limit and is unafraid of all time-honoured *taboos*; through a strenuous cultivation of intelligence for service that knows no distinction of colour and clime. The Spirit of Love, dwelling in the boundless realm of the surplus, emancipates our consciousness from the illusory bond of the separateness of self; it is ever trying to spread its illumination in the human world. This is the spirit of civilization, which in all its best endeavour invokes our supreme Being for the only bond of unity that leads us to truth, namely, that of righteousness:

Ya ēkō varnō bahudhā saktiyogāt
varnān anēkān nihitārthō dadhāti
vichaitti chānte visvamādau sa dēvah
sa nō budhyā subhayā samyunaktu.

He who is one, above all colours, and who with his manifold power supplies the inherent needs of men of all colours, who is in the beginning and in the end of the world, is divine, and may he unite us in a relationship of good will.

CHAPTER III

THE SURPLUS IN MAN

THERE ARE CERTAIN verses from the Atharva Veda in which the poet discusses his idea of Man, indicating some transcendental meaning that can be translated as follows:

> Who was it that imparted form to man, gave him majesty, movement, manifestation and character, inspired him with wisdom, music and dancing? When his body was raised upwards he found also the oblique sides and all other directions in him—he who is the Person, the citadel of the infinite being.
>
> *Tasmād vai vidvān purushamidan brahmēti manyatē.*
>
> And therefore the wise man knoweth this person as Brahma.
>
> *Sanātanam ēnam āhur utādya syāt punarnavah.*
>
> Ancient they call him, and yet he is renewed even now to-day.

In the very beginning of his career Man asserted in his bodily structure his first proclamation of freedom against the established rule of Nature. At a certain bend in the path of evolution he refused to remain a four-footed creature, and the position which he made his body to assume carried with it a permanent gesture of insubordination. For there could be no question that it was Nature's own plan to provide all land-walking mammals with two pairs of legs, evenly distributed along their lengthy trunk heavily weighted with a head at the end. This was the amicable compromise made with the earth when threatened by its conservative downward force, which extorts taxes for all movements. The fact that man gave up such an obviously sensible arrangement proves his inborn mania for repeated reforms of constitution, for pelting amendments at every resolution proposed by Providence.

If we found a four-legged table stalking about upright upon two of its stumps, the remaining two foolishly dangling by its sides, we should be afraid that it was either a nightmare or some supernormal caprice of that piece of furniture, indulging in a practical joke upon the carpenter's idea of fitness. The like absurd behaviour of Man's anatomy encourages us to guess that he was born under the influence of some comet of contradiction that forces its eccentric path against orbits regulated by Nature. And it is significant that Man should persist in his foolhardiness, in spite of the penalty he pays for opposing the orthodox rule of animal locomotion. He reduces by half the help of an easy balance of his muscles. He is ready to pass his infancy tottering through perilous experiments in making progress upon insufficient support, and followed all through his life by liability to sudden downfalls resulting in tragic or ludicrous consequences from which law-abiding quadrupeds are free. This was his great venture, the relinquishment of a secure position of his limbs,

which he could comfortably have retained in return for humbly salaaming the all-powerful dust at every step.

This capacity to stand erect has given our body its freedom of posture, making it easy for us to turn on all sides and realize ourselves at the centre of things. Physically, it symbolizes the fact that while animals have for their progress the prolongation of a narrow line Man has the enlargement of a circle. As a centre he finds his meaning in a wide perspective, and realizes himself in the magnitude of his circumference.

As one freedom leads to another, Man's eyesight also found a wider scope. I do not mean any enhancement of its physical power, which in many predatory animals has a better power of adjustment to light. But from the higher vantage of our physical watch-tower we have gained our *view*, which is not merely information about the location of things but their inter-relation and their unity.

But the best means of the expression of his physical freedom gained by Man in his vertical position is through the emancipation of his hands. In our bodily organization these have attained the highest dignity for their skill, their grace, their useful activities, as well as for those that are above all uses. They are the most detached of all our limbs. Once they had their menial vocation as our carriers, but raised from their position as *shudras*, they at once attained responsible status as our helpers. When instead of keeping them underneath us we offered them their place at our side, they revealed capacities that helped us to cross the boundaries of animal nature.

This freedom of view and freedom of action have been accompanied by an analogous mental freedom in Man through his imagination, which is the most distinctly human of all our faculties. It is there to help a creature who has been left unfinished by his designer, undraped, undecorated, unarmoured and without weapons, and, what is worse, ridden by a Mind whose energies for the most part are not tamed and tempered into some difficult ideal of completeness upon a background which is bare. Like all artists he has the freedom to make mistakes, to launch into desperate adventures contradicting and torturing his psychology or physiological normality. This freedom is a divine gift lent to the mortals who are untutored and undisciplined; and therefore the path of their creative progress is strewn with debris of devastation, and stages of their perfection haunted by apparitions of startling deformities. But, all the same, the very training of creation ever makes clear an aim which cannot be in any isolated freak of an individual mind or in that which is only limited to the strictly necessary.

Just as our eyesight enables us to include the individual fact of ourselves in the surrounding view, our imagination makes us intensely conscious of a life we must live which transcends the individual life and contradicts the biological meaning of the instinct of self-preservation. It works at the surplus, and extending beyond the reservation plots of our daily life builds there the guest chambers of priceless value to offer hospitality to the world-spirit of Man. We have such an honoured right to be the host when our spirit is a free spirit not

chained to the animal self. For free spirit is godly and alone can claim kinship with God.

Every true freedom that we may attain in any direction broadens our path of self-realization, which is in superseding the self. The unimaginative repetition of life within a safe restriction imposed by Nature may be good for the animal, but never for Man, who has the responsibility to outlive his life in order to live in truth.

And freedom in its process of creation gives rise to perpetual suggestions of something further than its obvious purpose. For freedom is for expressing the infinite; it imposes limits in its works, not to keep them in permanence but to break them over and over again, and to reveal the endless in unending surprises. This implies a history of constant regeneration, a series of fresh beginnings and continual challenges to the old in order to reach a more and more perfect harmony with some fundamental ideal of truth.

Our civilization, in the constant struggle for a great Further, runs through abrupt chapters of spasmodic divergences. It nearly always begins its new ventures with a cataclysm; for its changes are not mere seasonal changes of ideas gliding through varied periods of flowers and fruit. They are surprises lying in ambuscade provoking revolutionary adjustments. They are changes in the dynasty of living ideals—the ideals that are active in consolidating their dominion with strongholds of physical and mental habits, of symbols, ceremonials and adornments. But however violent may be the revolutions happening in whatever time or country, they never completely detach themselves from a common centre. They find their places in a history which is one.

The civilizations evolved in India or China, Persia or Judaea, Greece or Rome, are like several mountain peaks having different altitude, temperature, flora and fauna, and yet belonging to the same chain of hills. There are no absolute barriers of communication between them; their foundation is the same and they affect the meteorology of an atmosphere which is common to us all. This is at the root of the meaning of the great teacher who said he would not seek his own salvation if all men were not saved; for we all belong to a divine unity, from which our great-souled men have their direct inspiration; they feel it immediately in their own personality, and they proclaim in their life, 'I am one with the Supreme, with the Deathless, with the Perfect'.

Man, in his mission to create himself, tries to develop in his mind an image of his truth according to an idea which he believes to be universal, and is sure that any expression given to it will persist through all time. This is a mentality absolutely superfluous for biological existence. It represents his struggle for a life which is not limited to his body. For our physical life has its thread of unity in the memory of the past, whereas this ideal life dwells in the prospective memory of the future. In the records of past civilizations, unearthed from the closed records of dust, we find pathetic efforts to make their memories uninterrupted through the ages, like the effort of a child who sets adrift on a paper boat his dream of reaching the distant unknown. But why is

this desire? Only because we feel instinctively that in our ideal life we must touch all men and all times through the manifestation of a truth which is eternal and universal. And in order to give expression to it materials are gathered that are excellent and a manner of execution that has a permanent value. For we mortals must offer homage to the Man of the everlasting life. In order to do so, we are expected to pay a great deal more than we need for mere living, and in the attempt we often exhaust our very means of livelihood, and even life itself.

The ideal picture which a savage imagines of himself requires glaring paints and gorgeous fineries, a rowdiness in ornaments and even grotesque deformities of over-wrought extravagance. He tries to sublimate his individual self into a manifestation which he believes to have the majesty of the ideal Man. He is not satisfied with what he is in his natural limitations; he irresistibly feels something beyond the evident fact of himself which only could give him worth. It is the principle of power, which, according to his present mental stage, is the meaning of the universal reality whereto he belongs, and it is his pious duty to give expression to it even at the cost of his happiness. In fact, through it he becomes one with his God, for him his God is nothing greater than power. The savage takes immense trouble, and often suffers tortures, in order to offer in himself a representation of power in conspicuous colours and distorted shapes, in acts of relentless cruelty and intemperate bravado of self-indulgence. Such an appearance of rude grandiosity evokes a loyal reverence in the members of his community and a fear which gives them an aesthetic satisfaction because it illuminates for them the picture of a character which, as far as they know, belongs to ideal humanity. They wish to see in him not an individual, but the Man in whom they all are represented. Therefore, in spite of their sufferings, they enjoy being overwhelmed by his exaggerations and dominated by a will fearfully evident owing to its magnificent caprice in inflicting injuries. They symbolize their idea of unlimited wilfulness in their gods by ascribing to them physical and moral enormities in their anatomical idiosyncracy and virulent vindictiveness crying for the blood of victims, in personal preferences indiscriminate in the choice of recipients and methods of rewards and punishments. In fact, these gods could never be blamed for the least wavering in their conduct owing to any scrupulousness accompanied by the emotion of pity so often derided as sentimentalism by virile intellects of the present day.

However crude all this may be, it proves that Man has a feeling that he is truly represented in something which exceeds himself. He is aware that he is not imperfect, but incomplete. He knows that in himself some meaning has yet to be realized. We do not feel the wonder of it, because it seems so natural to us that barbarism in Man is not absolute, that its limits are like the limits of the horizon. The call is deep in his mind—the call of his own inner truth, which is beyond his direct knowledge and analytical logic. And individuals are born who have no doubt of the truth of this transcendental Man. As our consciousness more and more comprehends it, new valuations are developed

in us, new depths and delicacies of delight, a sober dignity of expression through elimination of tawdriness, of frenzied emotions, of all violence in shape, colour, words, or behaviour, of the dark mentality of Ku-Klux-Klanism.

Each age reveals its personality as dreamer in its great expressions that carry it across surging centuries to the continental plateau of permanent human history. These expressions may not be consciously religious, but indirectly they belong to Man's religion. For they are the outcome of the consciousness of the greater Man in the individual men of the race. This consciousness finds its manifestation in science, philosophy and the arts, in social ethics, in all things that carry their ultimate value in themselves. These are truly spiritual and they should all be consciously co-ordinated in one great religion of Man, representing his ceaseless endeavour to reach the perfect in great thoughts and deeds and dreams, in immortal symbols of art, revealing his aspiration for rising in dignity of being.

I had the occasion to visit the ruins of ancient Rome, the relics of human yearning towards the immense, the sight of which teases our mind out of thought. Does it not prove that in the vision of a great Roman Empire the creative imagination of the people rejoiced in the revelation of its transcendental humanity? It was the idea of an Empire which was not merely for opening an outlet to the pent-up pressure of over-population, or widening its field of commercial profit, but which existed as a concrete representation of the majesty of Roman personality, the soul of the people dreaming of a world-wide creation of its own for a fit habitation of the Ideal Man. It was Rome's titanic endeavour to answer the eternal question as to what Man truly was, as Man. And any answer given in earnest falls within the realm of religion, whatever may be its character; and this answer, in its truth, belongs not only to any particular people but to us all. It may be that Rome did not give the most perfect answer possible when she fought for her place as a world-builder of human history, but she revealed the marvellous vigour of the indomitable human spirit which could say, *Bhumaiva sukkam*, 'Greatness is happiness itself'. Her Empire has been sundered and shattered, but her faith in the sublimity of man still persists in one of the vast strata of human geology. And this faith was the true spirit of her religion, which had been dim in the tradition of her formal theology, merely supplying her with an emotional pastime and not with spiritual inspiration. In fact this theology fell far below her personality, and for that reason it went against her religion, whose mission was to reveal her humanity on the background of the eternal. Let us seek the religion of this and other people not in their gods but in Man, who dreamed of his own infinity and majestically worked for all time, defying danger and death.

Since the dim nebula of consciousness in Life's world became intensified into a centre of self in Man, his history began to unfold its rapid chapters; for it is the history of his strenuous answers in various forms to the question rising from this conscious self of his, 'What am I?' Man is not happy or contented as the animals are; for his happiness and his peace depend upon the truth of his answer. The animal attains his success in a physical sufficiency that satisfies his

nature. When a crocodile finds no obstruction in behaving like an orthodox crocodile he grins and grows and has no cause to complain. It is truism to say that Man also must behave like a man in order to find his truth. But he is sorely puzzled and asks in bewilderment: 'What is it to be like a man? What am I?' It is not left to the tiger to discover what is his own nature as a tiger, nor, for the matter of that, to choose a special colour for his coat according to his taste.

But Man has taken centuries to discuss the question of his own true nature and has not yet come to a conclusion. He has been building up elaborate religions to convince himself, against his natural inclinations, of the paradox that he is not what he is but something greater. What is significant about these efforts is the fact that in order to know himself truly Man in his religion cultivates the vision of a Being who exceeds him in truth and with whom also he has his kinship. These religions differ in details and often in their moral significance, but they have a common tendency. In them men seek their own supreme value, which they call divine, in some personality anthropomorphic in character. The Mind, which is abnormally scientific, scoffs at this; but it should know that religion is not essentially cosmic or even abstract; it finds itself when it touches the Brahma in man; otherwise it has no justification to exist.

It must be admitted that such a human element introduces into our religion a mentality that often has its danger in aberrations that are intellectually blind, morally reprehensible and aesthetically repellent. But these are wrong answers; they distort the truth of man and, like all mistakes in sociology, in economics or politics, they have to be fought against and overcome. Their truth has to be judged by the standard of human perfection and not by some arbitrary injunction that refuses to be confirmed by the tribunal of the human conscience. And great religions are the outcome of great revolutions in this direction causing fundamental changes of our attitude. These religions invariably made their appearance as a protest against the earlier creeds which had been unhuman, where ritualistic observances had become more important and outer compulsions more imperious. These creeds were, as I have said before, cults of power; they had their value for us, not helping us to become perfect through truth, but to grow formidable through possessions and magic control of the deity.

But possibly I am doing injustice to our ancestors. It is more likely that they worshipped power not merely because of its utility, but because they, in their way, recognized it as truth with which their own power had its communication and in which it found its fulfilment. They must have naturally felt that this power was the power of will behind nature, and not some impersonal insanity that unaccountably always stumbled upon correct results. For it would have been the greatest depth of imbecility on their part had they brought their homage to an abstraction, mindless, heartless and purposeless; in fact, infinitely below them in its manifestation.

CHAPTER IV

SPIRITUAL UNION

WHEN MAN'S preoccupation with the means of livelihood became less insistent he had the leisure to come to the mystery of his own self, and could not help feeling that the truth of his personality had both its relationship and its perfection in an endless world of humanity. His religion, which in the beginning had its cosmic background of power, came to a higher stage when it found its background in the human truth of personality. It must not be thought that in this channel it was narrowing the range of our consciousness of the infinite.

The negative idea of the infinite is merely an indefinite enlargement of the limits of things; in fact, a perpetual postponement of infinitude. I am told that mathematics has come to the conclusion that our world belongs to a space which is limited. It does not make us feel disconsolate. We do not miss very much and need not have a low opinion of space even if a straight line cannot remain straight and has an eternal tendency to come back to the point from which it started. In the Hindu Scripture the universe is described as an egg; that is to say, for the human mind it has its circular shell of limitation. The Hindu Scripture goes still further and says that time also is not continuous and our world repeatedly comes to an end to begin its cycle once again. In other words, in the region of time and space infinity consists of ever-revolving finitude.

But the positive aspect of the infinite is in *advaitam*, in an absolute unity, in which comprehension of the multitude is not as in an outer receptacle but as in an inner perfection that permeates and exceeds its contents, like the beauty in a lotus which is ineffably more than all the constituents of the flower. It is not the magnitude of extension but an intense quality of harmony which evokes in us the positive sense of the infinite in our joy, in our love. For *advaitam* is *anandam*; the infinite One is infinite Love. For those among whom the spiritual sense is dull, the desire for realization is reduced to physical possession, an actual grasping in space. This longing for magnitude becomes not an aspiration towards the great, but a mania for the big. But true spiritual realization is not through augmentation of possession in dimension or number. The truth that is infinite dwells in the ideal of unity which we find in the deeper relatedness. This truth of realization is not in space, it can only be realized in one's own inner spirit.

Ekadhaivanudrashtavyam etat aprameyam dhruvam.

This infinite and eternal has to be known as One.

Ākasat aja ātmā—'this birthless spirit is beyond space.' For it is *Purushah*, it is the '*Person*'.

The special mental attitude which India has in her religion is made clear by the word *Yoga*, whose meaning is to effect union. Union has its significance

not in the realm of *to have*, but in that of *to be*. To *gain* truth is to admit its separateness, but to *be* true is to become one with truth. Some religions, which deal with our relationship with God, assure us of reward if that relationship be kept true. This reward has an objective value. It gives us some reason outside ourselves for pursuing the prescribed path. We have such religions also in India. But those that have attained a greater height aspire for their fulfilment in union with *Narayana*, the supreme Reality of Man, which is divine.

Our union with this spirit is not to be attained through the mind. For our mind belongs to the department of economy in the human organism. It carefully husbands our consciousness for its own range of reason, within which to permit our relationship with the phenomenal world. But it is the object of *Yoga* to help us to transcend the limits built up by Mind. On the occasions when these are overcome, our inner self is filled with joy, which indicates that through such freedom we come into touch with the Reality that is an end in itself and therefore is bliss.

Once man had his vision of the infinite in the universal Light, and he offered his worship to the sun. He also offered his service to the fire with oblations. Then he felt the infinite in Life, which is Time in its creative aspect, and he said, *Yat kincha yadidam sarvam prana ejati nihsritam*, 'all that there is comes out of life and vibrates in it'. He was sure of it, being conscious of Life's mystery immediately in himself as the principle of purpose, as the organized will, the source of all his activities. His interpretation of the ultimate character of truth relied upon the suggestion that Life had brought to him, and not the non-living which is dumb. And then he came deeper into his being and said '*Raso vai sah*', 'the infinite is love itself',—the eternal spirit of joy. His religion, which is in his realization of the infinite, began its journey from the impersonal *dyaus*, 'the sky', wherein light had its manifestation; then came to Life, which represented the force of self-creation in time, and ended in *purushah*, the 'Person', in whom dwells timeless love. It said, *Tam vedyam purusham vedah*, 'Know him the Person who is to be realized', *Yatha ma vo mrityug parivyathah*— 'So that death may not cause you sorrow'. For this Person is deathless in whom the individual person has his immortal truth. Of him it is said: *Esha devo visvakarmā mahātmā sadā janānam hridaye sannivishatah*. 'This is the divine being, the world-worker, who is the Great Soul ever dwelling inherent in the hearts of all people.'

Ya etad vidur amritas te bhavanti. 'Those who realize him, transcend the limits of mortality'—not in duration of time, but in perfection of truth.

Our union with a Being whose activity is world-wide and who dwells in the heart of humanity cannot be a passive one. In order to be united with Him we have to divest our work of selfishness and become *visvakarmā*, 'the world-worker', we must work for all. When I use the words 'for all', I do not mean for a countless number of individuals. All work that is good, however small in extent, is universal in character. Such work makes for a realization of *Visvakarmā*, 'the World-Worker' who works for all. In order to be one with this Mahatma, 'the Great Soul', one must cultivate the greatness of soul which

identifies itself with the soul of all peoples and not merely with that of one's own. This helps us to understand what Buddha has described as *Brahmavihāra*, 'living in the infinite'. He says:

'Do not deceive each other, do not despise anybody anywhere, never in anger wish anyone to suffer through your body, words or thoughts. Like a mother maintaining her only son with her own life, keep thy immeasurable loving thought for all creatures.

'Above thee, below thee, on all sides of thee, keep on all the world thy sympathy and immeasurable loving thought which is without obstruction, without any wish to injure, without enmity.

'To be dwelling in such contemplation while standing, walking, sitting or lying down, until sleep overcomes thee, is called living in Brahma'.

This proves that Buddha's idea of the infinite was not the idea of a spirit of an unbounded cosmic activity, but the infinite whose meaning is in the positive ideal of goodness and love, which cannot be otherwise than human. By being charitable, good and loving, you do not realize the infinite, in the stars or rocks, but the infinite revealed in Man. Buddha's teaching speaks of Nirvana as the highest end. To understand its real character we have to know the path of its attainment, which is not merely through the negation of evil thoughts and deeds but through the elimination of all limits to love. It must mean the sublimation of self in a truth which is love itself, which unites in its bosom all those to whom we must offer our sympathy and service.

When somebody asked Buddha about the original cause of existence he sternly said that such questioning was futile and irrelevant. Did he not mean that it went beyond the human sphere as our goal—that though such a question might legitimately be asked in the region of cosmic philosophy or science, it had nothing to do with man's *dharma*, man's inner nature, in which love finds its utter fulfilment, in which all his sacrifice ends in an eternal gain, in which the putting out of the lamplight is no loss because there is the all-pervading light of the sun. And did those who listened to the great teacher merely hear his words and understand his doctrines? No, they directly felt in him what he was preaching, in the living language of his own person, the ultimate truth of Man.

It is significant that all great religions have their historic origin in persons who represented in their life a truth which was not cosmic and unmoral, but human and good. They rescued religion from the magic stronghold of demon force and brought it into the inner heart of humanity, into a fulfilment not confined to some exclusive good fortune of the individual but to the welfare of all men. This was not for the spiritual ecstasy of lonely souls, but for the spiritual emancipation of all races. They came as the messengers of Man to men of all countries and spoke of the salvation that could only be reached by the perfecting of our relationship with Man the Eternal, Man the Divine. Whatever might be their doctrines of God, or some dogmas that they borrowed from their own time and tradition, their life and teaching had the deeper implication of a Being who is the infinite in Man, the Father, the

Friend, the Lover, whose service must be realized through serving all mankind. For the God in Man depends upon men's service and men's love for his own love's fulfilment.

The question was once asked in the shade of the ancient forest of India:

Kasmai devāya havishā vidhema?

Who is the God to whom we must bring our oblation?

That question is still ours, and to answer it we must know in the depth of our love and the maturity of our wisdom what man is—know him not only in sympathy but in science, in the joy of creation and in the pain of heroism; *tena tyaktena bhunjitha*, 'enjoy him through sacrifice'—the sacrifice that comes of love; *ma gridhah*, 'covet not'; for greed diverts your mind to that illusion in you which you represent the *parama purushah*, 'the supreme Person'.

Our greed diverts our consciousness to materials away from that supreme value of truth which is the quality of the universal being. The gulf thus created by the receding stream of the soul we try to replenish with a continuous stream of wealth, which may have the power to fill but not the power to unite and recreate. Therefore the gap is dangerously concealed under the glittering quicksand of things, which by their own weight cause a sudden subsidence while we are in the depths of sleep.

The real tragedy, however, does not lie in the risk of our material security but in the obscuration of Man himself in the human world. In the creative activities of his soul Man realizes his surroundings as his larger self, instinct with his own life and love. But in his ambition he deforms and defiles it with the callous handling of his voracity. His world of utility assuming a gigantic proportion, reacts upon his inner nature and hypnotically suggests to him a scheme of the universe which is an abstract system. In such a world there can be no question of *mukti*, the freedom in truth, because it is a solidly solitary fact, a cage with no sky beyond it. In all appearance our world is a closed world of hard facts; it is like a seed with its tough cover. But within this enclosure is working our silent cry of life for *mukti*, even when its possibility is darkly silent. When some huge overgrown temptation tramples into stillness this living aspiration then does civilization die like a seed that has lost its urging for germination. And this *mukti* is in the truth that dwells in the ideal man.

CHAPTER V

THE PROPHET

IN MY INTRODUCTION I have stated that the universe to which we are related through our sense perception, reason or imagination, is necessarily Man's universe. Our physical self gains strength and success through its correct relationship in knowledge and practice with its physical aspect. The mysteries of all its phenomena are generalized by man as laws which have their harmony with his rational mind. In the primitive period of our history Man's physical dealings with the external world were most important for the maintenance of his life, the life which he has in common with other creatures, and therefore the first expression of his religion was physical—it came from his sense of wonder and awe at the manifestations of power in Nature and his attempt to win it for himself and his tribe by magical incantations and rites. In other words his religion tried to gain a perfect communion with the mysterious magic of Nature's forces through his own power of magic. Then came the time when he had the freedom of leisure to divert his mind to his inner nature and the mystery of his own personality gained for him its highest importance. And instinctively his personal self sought its fulfilment in the truth of a higher personality. In the history of religion our realization of its nature has gone through many changes even like our realization of the nature of the material world. Our method of worship has followed the course of such changes, but its evolution has been from the external and magical towards the moral and spiritual significance.

The first profound record of the change of direction in Man's religion we find in the message of the great prophet in Persia, Zarathustra, and as usual it was accompanied by a revolution. In a later period the same thing happened in India, and it is evident that the history of this religious struggle lies embedded in the epic Mahabharata associated with the name of Krishna and the teachings of Bhagavadgita.

The most important of all outstanding facts of Iranian history is the religious reform brought about by Zarathustra. There can be hardly any question that he was the first man we know who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion and at the same time preached the doctrine of monotheism which offered an eternal foundation of reality to goodness as an ideal of perfection. All religions of the primitive type try to keep men bound with regulations of external observances. Zarathustra was the greatest of all the pioneer prophets who showed the path of freedom to man, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from the blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, the freedom from the multiplicity of shrines which draw our worship away from the single-minded chastity of devotion.

To most of us it sounds like a truism to-day when we are told that the moral goodness of a deed comes from the goodness of intention. But it is a truth which once came to Man like a revelation of light in the darkness and

it has not yet reached all the obscure corners of humanity. We still see around us men who fearfully follow, hoping thereby to gain merit, the path of blind formalism, which has no living moral source in the mind. This will make us understand the greatness of Zarathustra. Though surrounded by believers in magical rites, he proclaimed in those dark days of unreason that religion has its truth in its moral significance, not in external practices of imaginary value; that its value is in upholding man in his life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

'The prophet', says Dr. Geiger, 'qualifies his religion as 'unheard of words' (*Yasna* 31. I) or as a 'mystery' (Y.48. 3.) because he himself regards it as a religion quite distinct from the belief of the people hitherto. The revelation he announces is to him no longer a matter of sentiment, no longer a merely undefined presentiment and conception of the Godhead, but a matter of intellect, of spiritual perception and knowledge. This is of great importance, for there are probably not many religions of so high antiquity in which this fundamental doctrine, that religion is a knowledge or learning, a science of what is true, is so precisely declared as in the tenets of the Gathas. It is the unbelieving that are unknowing; on the contrary, the believing are learned because they have penetrated into this knowledge.'

It may be incidentally mentioned here, as showing the parallel to this in the development of Indian religious thought, that all through the Upanishad spiritual truth is termed with a repeated emphasis, *vidya*, knowledge, which has for its opposite *avidya*, acceptance of error born of unreason.

The outer expression of truth reaches its white light of simplicity through its inner realization. True simplicity is the physiognomy of perfection. In the primitive stages of spiritual growth, when man is dimly aware of the mystery of the infinite in his life and the world, when he does not fully know the inward character of his relationship with this truth, his first feeling is either of dread, or of greed of gain. This drives him into wild exaggeration in worship, frenzied convulsions of ceremonialism. But in Zarathustra's teachings, which are best reflected in his Gathas, we have hardly any mention of the ritualism of worship. Conduct and its moral motives have there received almost the sole attention.

The orthodox Persian form of worship in ancient Iran included animal sacrifices and offering of *haema* to the *daevas.* That all these should be discountenanced by Zarathustra not only shows his courage, but the strength of his realization of the Supreme Being as spirit. We are told that it has been mentioned by Plutarch that 'Zarathustra taught the Persians to sacrifice to Ahura Mazda, "vows and thanksgivings"'. The distance between faith in the efficiency of the bloodstained magical rites, and cultivation of the moral and spiritual ideals as the true form of worship is immense. It is amazing to see how Zarathustra was the first among men who crossed this distance with a certainty of realization which imparted such a fervour of faith to his life and his words. The truth which filled his mind was not a thing which he borrowed from books or received from teachers; he did not come to it by following a prescribed path of tradition, but it came to him as an illumination of his entire life, almost like

a communication of his universal self to his personal self, and he proclaimed this utmost immediacy of his knowledge when he said:

> When I conceived of Thee, O Mazda, as the very First and the Last, as the most Adorable One, as the Father of the Good Thought, as the Creator of Truth and Right, as the Lord Judge of our actions in life, then I made a place for Thee in my very eyes.—*Yasna* 31.8 (Translation D.J. Irani).

It was the direct stirring of his soul which made him say:

> Thus do I announce the Greatest of all! I weave my songs of praise for him through Truth, helpful and beneficent of all that live. Let Ahura Mazda listen to them with his Holy Spirit, for the Good Mind instructed me to adore Him; by his wisdom let Him teach me about what is best.—*Yasna* 45.6 (Translation D.J. Irani).

The truth which is not reached through the analytical process of reasoning and does not depend for proof on some corroboration of outward facts or the prevalent faith and practice of the people—the truth which comes like an inspiration out of context with its surroundings brings with it an assurance that it has been sent from an inner source of divine wisdom, that the individual who has realized it is specially inspired and therefore has his responsibility as a direct medium of communication of Divine Truth.

As long as man deals with his God as the dispenser of benefits only to those of His worshippers who know the secret of propitiating Him, he tries to keep Him for his own self or for the tribe to which he belongs. But directly the moral nature, that is to say, the humanity of God is apprehended, man realizes his divine self in his religion, his God is no longer an outsider to be propitiated for a special concession. The consciousness of God transcends the limitations of race and gathers together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union. Zarathustra was the first prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of the tribal God, the God of a chosen people, and offered it the universal Man. This is a great fact in the history of religion. The Master said, when the enlightenment came to him:

> Verily I believed Thee, O Ahura Mazda, to be the Supreme Benevolent Providence, when Sraosha came to me with the Good Mind, when first I received and became wise with your words. And though the task be difficult, though woe may come to me, I shall proclaim to all mankind Thy message, which Thou declarest to be the best.—*Yasna* 43 (Translation D.J. Irani).

He prays to Mazda:

> This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura, the religion that is best for all mankind, the religion, which based on truth, should prosper in all that is ours, the religion which establishes our actions in order and justice by the Divine songs of Perfect Piety, which has for its

> intelligent desire of desires, the desire for Thee, O Mazda.—*Yasna* 44.10 (Translation D.J. Irani).

With the undoubted assurance and hope of one who has got a direct vision of Truth he speaks to the word:

> Hearken unto me, Ye who come from near and from far! Listen for I shall speak forth now; ponder well over all things, weigh my words with care and clear thought. Never shall the false teacher destroy this world for a second time, for his tongue stands mute, his creed exposed.—*Yasna* 45.1 (Translation D.J. Irani).

I think it can be said without doubt that such a high conception of religion, uttered in such a clear note of affirmation with a sure note of conviction that it is a truth of the ultimate ideal of perfection which must be revealed to all humanity, even at the cost of martyrdom, is unique in the history of any religion belonging to such a remote dawn of civilization.

There was a time when, along with other Aryan peoples, the Persian also worshipped the elemental gods of Nature, whose favour was not to be won by any moral duty performed or service of love. That in fact was the crude beginning of the scientific spirit trying to unlock the hidden sources of power in nature. But through it all there must have been some current of deeper desire, which constantly contradicted the cult of power and indicated worlds of inner good, infinitely more precious than material gain. Its voice was not strong at first nor was it heeded by the majority of the people; but its influences, like the life within the seed, were silently working.

Then comes the great prophet; and in his life and mind the hidden fire of truth suddenly bursts out into flame. The best in the people works for long obscure ages in hints and whispers till it finds its voice which can never again be silenced. For that voice becomes the voice of Man, no longer confined to a particular time or people. It works across intervals of silence and oblivion, depression and defeat, and comes out again with its conquering call. It is a call to the fighter, the fighter against untruth, against all that lures away man's spirit from its high mission of freedom into the meshes of materialism.

Zarathustra's voice is still a living voice, not alone a matter of academic interest for historical scholars who deal with the facts of the past; nor merely the guide of a small community of men in the daily details of their life. Rather, of all teachers Zarathustra was the first who addressed his words to all humanity, regardless of distance of space or time. He was not like a cave-dweller who, by some chance of friction, had lighted a lamp and, fearing lest it could not be shared with all, secured it with a miser's care for his own domestic use. But he was the watcher in the night, who stood on the lonely peak facing the East and broke out singing the paeans of light to the sleeping world when the sun came out on the brim of the horizon. The Sun of Truth is for all, he declared—its light is to unite the far and the near. Such a message always arouses the antagonism of those whose habits have become nocturnal, whose vested interest is in the darkness. And there was a bitter fight in the

lifetime of the prophet between his followers and the others who were addicted to the ceremonies that had tradition on their side, and not truth.

We are told that 'Zarathustra was descended from a kingly family', and also that the first converts to his doctrine were of the ruling caste. But the priesthood, 'the Kavis and the Karapans, often succeeded in bringing the rulers over to their side'. So we find that, in this fight, the princes of the land divided themselves into two opposite parties as we find in India in the Kurukshetra War.

It has been a matter of supreme satisfaction to me to realize that the purification of faith which was the mission of the great teachers in both communities, in Persia and in India, followed a similar line. We have already seen how Zarathustra spiritualized the meaning of sacrifice, which in former days consisted in external ritualism entailing bloodshed. The same thing we find in the Gita, in which the meaning of the word *Yajna* has been translated into a higher significance than it had in its crude form.

According to the Gita, the deeds that are done solely for the sake of self fetter our soul; the disinterested action, performed for the sake of the giving up of self, is the true sacrifice. For creation itself comes of the self-sacrifice of Brahma, which has no other purpose; and therefore, in our performance of the duty which is self-sacrificing, we realize the spirit of Brahma.

The Ideal of Zoroastrian Persia is distinctly ethical. It sends its call to men to work together with the Eternal Spirit of Good in spreading and maintaining *Kshathra*, the kingdom of righteousness, against all attacks of evil. This ideal gives us our place as collaborators with God in distributing his blessings over the world.

> Clear is this to the man of wisdom as to the man who carefully thinks;
> He who upholds Truth with all the might of his power,
> He who upholds Truth the utmost in his words and deed,
> He, indeed, is Thy most valued helper, O Mazda Ahura!
>
> *Yasna* 31.22 (Translation D.J. Irani)

It is a fact of supreme moment to us that the human world is in an incessant state of war between that which will save us and that which will drag us into the abyss of disaster. Our one hope lies in the fact that Ahura Mazda is on our side if we choose the right course.

The active heroic aspect of this religion reflects the character of the people themselves, who later on spread conquests far and wide and built up great empires by the might of their sword. They accepted this world in all seriousness. They had their zest in life and confidence in their own strength. They belonged to the western half of Asia and their great influence travelled through the neighbouring civilization of Judaea towards the Western Continent. Their ideal was the ideal of the fighter. By force of will and deeds of sacrifice they were to conquer *haurvatat*—welfare in this world, and *ameratat*—immortality in the other. This is the best ideal in the West, the great truth of fight. For paradise has to be gained through conquest. That sacred task is for the heroes, who are to take the right side in the battle, and the right weapons.

There was a heroic period in Indian history, when this holy spirit of fight was invoked by the greatest poet of the Sanskrit Literature. It is not to be wondered at that his ideal of fight was similar to the ideal that Zarathustra preached. The problem with which his poem starts is that paradise has to be rescued by the hero from its invasion by evil beings. This is the eternal problem of man. The evil spirit is exultant and paradise is lost when *Sati*, the spirit of *Sat* (Reality), is disunited from *Siva*, the Spirit of Goodness. The Real and the Good must meet in wedlock if the hero is to take his birth in order to save all that is true and beautiful. When the union was attempted through the agency of passion, the anger of God was aroused and the result was a tragedy of disappointment. At last, by purification through penance, the wedding was effected, the hero was born who fought against the forces of evil and paradise was regained. This is a poem of the ideal of the moral fight, whose first great prophet was Zarathustra.

We must admit that this ideal has taken a stronger hold upon the life of man in the West than in India—the West, where the vigour of life receives its fullest support from Nature and the excess of energy finds its delight in ceaseless activities. But everywhere in the world, the unrealized ideal is a force of disaster. It gathers its strength in secret even in the heart of prosperity, kills the soul first and then drives men to their utter ruin. When the aggressive activity of will, which naturally accompanies physical vigour, fails to accept the responsibility of its ideal, it breeds unappeasable greed for material gain, leads to unmeaning slavery of things, till amidst a raging conflagration of clashing interests the tower of ambition topples down to the dust.

And for this, the prophetic voice of Zarathustra reminds us that all human activities must have an ideal goal, which is an end to itself, and therefore is peace, is immortality. It is the House of Songs, the realization of love, which comes through strenuous service of goodness.

> All the joys of life which Thou holdest, O Mazda, the joys that were, the joys that are, and the joys that shall be, Thou dost apportion all in Thy love for us.

We, on the other hand, in the tropical East, who have no surplus of physical energy inevitably overflowing in outer activities, also have our own ideal given to us. Our course is not so much through the constant readiness to fight in the battle of the good and evil, as through the inner concentration of mind, through pacifying the turbulence of desire, to reach that serenity of the infinite in our being which leads to the harmony in the all. Here, likewise, the unrealized ideal pursues us with its malediction. As the activities of a vigorous vitality may become unmeaning, and thereupon smother the soul with a mere multiplicity of material, so the peace of the extinguished desire may become the peace of death; and the inner world, in which we would dwell, become a world of incoherent dreams.

The negative process of curbing desire and controlling passion is only for saving our energy from dissipation and directing it into its proper channel. If

the path of the channel we have chosen runs withinwards, it also must have its expression in action, not for any ulterior reward, but for the proving of its own truth. If the test of action is removed, if our realization grows purely subjective, then it may become like travelling in a desert in the night, going round and round the same circle, imagining all the while that we are following the straight path of purpose.

This is why the prophet of the Gita in the first place says:

> Who so forsakes all desires and goeth onwards free from yearnings, selfless and without egoism, he goeth to peace.

But he does not stop here, he adds:

> Surrendering all actions to me, with Thy thoughts resting on the Supreme Self, from hope and egoism freed, and of mental fever cured, engage in battle.

Action there must be, fight we must have—not the fight of passion and desire, or arrogant self-assertion, but of duty done in the presence of the Eternal, the disinterested fight of the serene soul that helps us in our union with the Supreme Being.

In this, the teaching of Zarathustra, his sacred gospel of fight finds its unity. The end of the fight he preaches is in the House of Songs, in the symphony of spiritual union. He sings:

> Ye, who wish to be allied to the Good Mind, to be friend with Truth, Ye who desire to sustain the Holy Cause, down with all anger and violence, away with all ill-will and strife! Such benevolent men, O Mazda, I shall take to the House of Songs!

The detailed facts of history, which are the battle-ground of the learned, are not my province. I am a singer myself, and I am ever attracted by the strains that come forth from the House of Songs. When the streams of ideals that flow from the East and from the West mingle their murmur in some profound harmony of meaning it delights my soul.

In the realm of material property men are jealously proud of their possessions and their exclusive rights. Unfortunately there are quarrelsome men who bring that pride of acquisition, the worldliness of sectarianism, even into the region of spiritual truth. Would it be sane, if the man in China should lay claim to the ownership of the sun because he can prove the earlier sunrise in his own country?

For myself, I feel proud whenever I find that the best in the world have their fundamental agreement. It is their function to unite and to dissuade the small from bristling-up, like prickly shrubs, in the pride of the minute points of their differences, only to hurt one another.

CHAPTER VI

THE VISION

I HOPE THAT my readers have understood, as they have read these pages, that I am neither a scholar nor a philosopher. They should not expect from me fruits gathered from a wide field of studies or wealth brought by a mind trained in the difficult exploration of knowledge. Fortunately for me the subject of religion gains in interest and value by the experience of the individuals who earnestly believe in its truth. This is my apology for offering a part of the story of my life which has always realized its religion through a process of growth and not by the help of inheritance or importation.

Man has made the entire geography of the earth his own, ignoring the boundaries of climate; for, unlike the lion and the reindeer, he has the power to create his special skin and temperature, including his unscrupulous power of borrowing the skins of the indigenous inhabitants and misappropriating their fats.

His kingdom is also continually extending in time through a great surplus in his power of memory, to which is linked his immense facility of borrowing the treasure of the past from all quarters of the world. He dwells in a universe of history, in an environment of continuous remembrance. The animal occupies time only through the multiplication of its own race, but man through the memorials of his mind, raised along the pilgrimage of progress. The stupendousness of his knowledge and wisdom is due to their roots spreading into and drawing sap from the far-reaching area of history.

Man has his other dwelling place in the realm of inner realization, in the element of an immaterial value. This is a world where from the subterranean soil of his mind his consciousness often, like a seed, unexpectedly sends up sprouts into the heart of a luminous freedom, and the individual is made to realize his truth in the universal Man. I hope it may prove of interest if I give an account of my own personal experience of a sudden spiritual outburst from within me which is like the underground current of a perennial stream unexpectedly welling up on the surface.

I was born in a family which, at that time, was earnestly developing a monotheistic religion based upon the philosophy of the Upanishad. Somehow my mind at first remained coldly aloof, absolutely uninfluenced by any religion whatever. It was through an idiosyncrasy of my temperament that I refused to accept any religious teaching merely because people in my surroundings believed it to be true. I could not persuade myself to imagine that I had a religion because everybody whom I might trust believed in its value.

Thus my mind was brought up in an atmosphere of freedom—freedom from the dominance of any creed that had its sanction in the definite authority of some scripture, or in the teaching of some organized body of worshippers. And, therefore, the man who questions me has every right to distrust my vision and reject my testimony. In such a case, the authority of some particular book

venerated by a large number of men may have greater weight than the assertion of an individual, and therefore I never claim any right to preach.

When I look back upon those days, it seems to me that unconsciously I followed the path of my Vedic ancestors, and was inspired by the tropical sky with its suggestion of an uttermost Beyond. The wonder of the gathering clouds hanging heavy with the unshed rain, of the sudden sweep of storms arousing vehement gestures along the line of coconut trees, the fierce loneliness of the blazing summer noon, the silent sunrise behind the dewy veil of autumn morning, kept my mind with the intimacy of a pervasive companionship.

Then came my initiation ceremony of Brahminhood when the *Gayatri* verse of meditation was given to me, whose meaning, according to the explanation I had, runs as follows:

> Let me contemplate the adorable splendour of Him who created the earth, the air and the starry spheres, and sends the power of comprehension within our minds.

This produced a sense of serene exaltation in me, the daily meditation upon the infinite being which unites in one stream of creation my mind and the outer world. Though to-day I find no difficulty in realizing this being as an infinite personality in whom the subject and object are perfectly reconciled, at that time the idea to me was vague. Therefore the current of feeling that it aroused in my mind was indefinite, like the circulation of air—an atmosphere which needed a definite world to complete itself and satisfy me. For it is evident that my religion is a poet's religion, and neither that of an orthodox man of piety nor that of a theologian. Its touch comes to me through the same unseen and trackless channel as does the inspiration of my songs. My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has my poetical life. Somehow they are wedded to each other and, though their betrothal had a long period of ceremony, it was kept secret to me.

When I was eighteen, a sudden spring breeze of religious experience for the first time came to my life and passed away leaving in my memory a direct message of spiritual reality. One day while I stood watching at early dawn the sun sending out its rays from behind the trees, I suddenly felt as if some ancient mist had in a moment lifted from my sight, and the morning light on the face of the world revealed an inner radiance of joy. The invisible screen of the commonplace was removed from all things and all men, and their ultimate significance was intensified in my mind; and this is the definition of beauty. That which was memorable in this experience was its human message, the sudden expansion of my consciousness in the super-personal world of man. The poem I wrote on the first day of my surprise was named 'The Awakening of the Waterfall'. The waterfall, whose spirit lay dormant in its ice-bound isolation, was touched by the sun and, bursting in a cataract of freedom, it found its finality in an unending sacrifice, in a continual union with the sea. After four days the vision passed away, and the lid hung down upon my inner sight. In the dark, the world once again put on its disguise of the obscurity of an ordinary fact.

When I grew older and was employed in a responsible work in some villages I took my place in a neighbourhood where the current of time ran slow and joys and sorrows had their simple and elemental shades and lights. The day which had its special significance for me came with all its drifting trivialities of the commonplace life. The ordinary work of my morning had come to its close and before going to take my bath I stood for a moment at my window, overlooking a market place on the bank of a dry river bed, welcoming the first flood of rain along its channel. Suddenly I became conscious of a stirring of soul within me. My world of experience in a moment seemed to become lighted, and facts that were detached and dim found a great unity of meaning. The feeling which I had was like that which a man, groping through a fog without knowing his destination, might feel when he suddenly discovers that he stands before his own house.

I still remember the day in my childhood when I was made to struggle across my lessons in a first primer, strewn with isolated words smothered under the burden of spelling. The morning hour appeared to me like a once-illumined page, grown dusty and faded, discoloured into irrelevant marks, smudges and gaps, wearisome in its moth-eaten meaninglessness. Suddenly I came to a rhymed sentence of combined words, which may be translated thus—'It rains, the leaves tremble'. At once I came to a world wherein I recovered my full meaning. My mind touched the creative realm of expression, and at that moment I was no longer a mere student with his mind muffled by spelling lessons, enclosed by classroom. The rhythmic picture of the tremulous leaves beaten by the rain opened before my mind the world which does not merely carry information, but a harmony with my being. The unmeaning fragments lost their individual isolation and my mind revelled in the unity of a vision. In a similar manner, on that morning in the village, the facts of my life suddenly appeared to me in a luminous unity of truth. All things that had seemed like vagrant waves were revealed to my mind in relation to a boundless sea. I felt sure that some Being who comprehended me and my world was seeking his best expression in all my experiences, uniting them into an ever-widening individuality which is a spiritual work of art.

To this Being I was responsible; for the creation in me is his as well as mine. It may be that it was the same creative Mind that is shaping the universe to its eternal idea; but in me as a person it had one of its special centres of a personal relationship growing into a deepening consciousness. I had my sorrows that left their memory in a long burning track across my days, but I felt at that moment that in them I lent myself to a travail of creation that ever exceeded my own personal bounds like stars which in their individual fire-bursts are lighting the history of the universe. It gave me a great joy to feel in my life detachment at the idea of a mystery of a meeting of the two in a creative comradeship. I felt that I had found my religion at last, the religion of Man, in which the infinite became defined in humanity and came close to me so as to need my love and co-operation.

This idea of mine found at a later date its expression in some of my poems

addressed to what I called *Jivan devātā*, the Lord of my life. Fully aware of my awkwardness in dealing with a foreign language, with some hesitation I give a translation, being sure that any evidence revealed through the self-recording instrument of poetry is more authentic than answers extorted through conscious questionings:

Thou who art the innermost Spirit of my being,
art thou pleased,
    Lord of my Life?
For I gave to thee my cup
filled with all the pain and delight
that the crushed grapes of my heart had surrendered,
I wove with the rhythm of colours and songs the cover for thy bed,
and with the molten gold of my desires
I fashioned playthings for thy passing hours.

I know not why thou chosest me for thy partner,
    Lord of my life!
Dist thou store my days and nights,
my deeds and dreams for the alchemy of thy art,
and string in the chain of thy music my songs of autumn and spring,
and gather the flowers from my mature moments for thy crown?

I see thine eyes gazing at the dark of my heart,
    Lord of my life,
I wonder if my failures and wrongs are forgiven.
For many were my days without service
and nights of forgetfulness;
futile were the flowers that faded in the shade not
    offered to thee.
Often the tired strings of my lute
slackened at the strain of thy tunes.
And often at the ruin of wasted hours
my desolate evenings were filled with tears.

But have my days come to their end at last,
    Lord of my life,
while my arms round thee grow limp,
my kisses losing their truth?
Then break up the meeting of this languid day.
Renew the old in me in fresh forms of delight;
and let the wedding come once again
in a new ceremony of life.

You will understand from this how unconsciously I had been travelling towards the realization which I stumbled upon in an idle moment on a day in July, when morning clouds thickened on the eastern horizon and a caressing shadow lay on the tremulous bamboo branches, while an excited group of

village boys was noisily dragging from the bank an old fishing boat; and I cannot tell how at that moment an unexpected train of thoughts ran across my mind like a strange caravan carrying the wealth of an unknown kingdom.

From my infancy I had a keen sensitiveness which kept my mind tingling with consciousness of the world around me, natural and human. We had a small garden attached to our house; it was a fairyland to me, where miracles of beauty were of everyday occurrence.

Almost every morning in the early hour of the dusk, I would run out from my bed in a great hurry to greet the first pink flush of the dawn through the shivering branches of the palm trees which stood in a line along the garden boundary, while the grass glistened as the dew-drops caught the earliest tremor of the morning breeze. The sky seemed to bring to me the call of a personal companionship, and all my heart—my whole body in fact—used to drink in at a draught the overflowing light and peace of those silent hours. I was anxious never to miss a single morning, because each one was precious to me, more precious than gold to the miser. I am certain that I felt a larger meaning of my own self when the barrier vanished between me and what was beyond myself.

I had been blessed with that sense of wonder which gives a child his right of entry into the treasure house of mystery in the depth of existence. My studies in the school I neglected, because they rudely dismembered me from the context of my world and I felt miserable, like a caged rabbit in a biological institute. This, perhaps, will explain the meaning of my religion. This world was living to me, intimately close to my life, permeated by a subtle touch of kinship which enhanced the value of my own being.

It is true that this world also has its impersonal aspect of truth which is pursued by the man of impersonal science. The father has his personal relationship with his son; but as a doctor he may detach the fact of a son from that relationship and let the child become an abstraction to him, only a living body with its physiological functions. It cannot be said that if through the constant pursuit of his vocations he altogether discards the personal element in his relation to his son he reaches a greater truth as a doctor than he does as a father. The scientific knowledge of his son is information about a fact, and not the realization of a truth. In his intimate feeling for his son he touches an ultimate truth—the truth of relationship, the truth of a harmony in the universe, the fundamental principle of creation. It is not merely the number of protons and electrons which represents the truth of an element; it is the mystery of their relationship which cannot be analysed. We are made conscious of this truth of relationship immediately within us in our love, in our joy; and from this experience of ours we have the right to say that the Supreme One, who relates all things, comprehends the universe, is all love—the love that is the highest truth being the most perfect relationship.

I still remember the shock of repulsion I received as a child when some medical student brought to me a piece of a human windpipe and tried to excite my admiration for its structure. He tried to convince me that it was the

source of the beautiful human voice. But I could not bear the artisan to occupy the throne that was for the artist who concealed the machinery and revealed the creation in its ineffable unity. God does not care to keep exposed the record of his power written in geological inscriptions, but he is proudly glad of the expression of beauty which he spreads on the green grass, in the flowers, in the play of the colours on the clouds, in the murmuring music of running water.

I had a vague notion as to who or what it was that touched my heart's chords, like the infant which does not know its mother's name, or who or what she is. The feeling which I always had was a deep satisfaction of personality that flowed into my nature through living channels of communication from all sides.

I am afraid that the scientist may remind me that to lose sight of the distinction between life and non-life, the human and the non-human, is a sign of the primitive mind. While admitting it, let me hope that it is not an utter condemnation, but rather the contrary. It may be a true instinct of Science itself, an instinctive logic, which makes the primitive mind think that humanity has become possible as a fact only because of a universal human truth which has harmony with its reason, with its will. In the details of our universe there are some differences that may be described as non-human, but not in their essence. The bones are different from the muscles, but they are organically one in the body. Our feeling of joy, our imagination, realizes a profound organic unity with the universe comprehended by the human mind. Without minimizing the differences that are in detailed manifestations, there is nothing wrong in trusting the mind, which is occasionally made intensely conscious of an all-pervading personality answering to the personality of man.

The details of reality must be studied in their differences by Science, but it can never know the character of the grand unity of relationship pervading it, which can only be realized immediately by the human spirit. And therefore it is the primal imagination of man—the imagination which is fresh and immediate in its experiences—that exclaims in a poet's verse:

> Wisdom and spirit of the universe!
> Thou soul, that art the eternity of thought,
> And giv'st to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion.

And in another poet's words it speaks of

> That light whose smile kindles the universe,
> That Beauty in which all things work and move.

The theologian may follow the scientist and shake his head and say that all that I have written is pantheism. But let us not indulge in an idolatry of name and dethrone living truth in its favour. When I say that I am a man, it is implied by that word that there is such a thing as a general idea of Man which persistently manifests itself in every particular human being, who is different from all other individuals. If we lazily label such a belief as 'pananthropy' and divert our

thoughts from its mysteriousness by such a title it does not help us much. Let me assert my faith by saying that this world, consisting of what we call animate and inanimate things, has found its culmination in man, its best expression. Man, as a creation, represents the Creator, and this is why of all creatures it has been possible for him to comprehend this world in his knowledge and in his feeling and in his imagination, to realize in his individual spirit a union with a Spirit that is everywhere.

There is an illustration that I have made use of in which I supposed that a stranger from some other planet has paid a visit to our earth and happens to hear the sound of a human voice on the gramophone. All that is obvious to him and most seemingly active, is the revolving disc. He is unable to discover the personal truth that lies behind, and so might accept the impersonal scientific fact of the disc as final—the fact that could be touched and measured. He would wonder how it could be possible for a machine to speak to the soul. Then, if in pursuing the mystery, he should suddenly come to the heart of the music through a meeting with the composer, he would at once understand the meaning of that music as a personal communication.

That which merely gives us information can be explained in terms of measurement, but that which gives us joy cannot be explained by the facts of a mere grouping of atoms and molecules. Somewhere in the arrangement of this world there seems to be a great concern about giving us delight, which shows that, in the universe, over and above the meaning of matter and forces, there is a message conveyed through the magic touch of personality. This touch cannot be analysed, it can only be felt. We cannot prove it any more than the man from the other planet could prove to the satisfaction of his fellows the personality which remained invisible, but which, through the machinery, spoke direct to the heart.

Is it merely because the rose is round and pink that it gives me more satisfaction than the gold which could buy me the necessities of life, or any number of slaves? One may, at the outset, deny the truth that a rose gives more delight than a piece of gold. But such an objector must remember that I am not speaking of artificial values. If we had to cross a desert whose sand was made of gold, then the cruel glitter of these dead particles would become a terror for us, and the sight of a rose would bring to us the music of paradise.

The final meaning of the delight which we find in a rose can never be in the roundness of its petals, just as the final meaning of the joy of music cannot be in a gramophone disc. Somehow we feel that through a rose the language of love reached our heart. Do we not carry a rose to our beloved because in it is already embodied a message which, unlike our language of words, cannot be analysed. Through this gift of a rose we utilize a universal language of joy for our own purposes of expression.

Fortunately for me a collection of old lyrical poems composed by the poets of the Vaishnava sect came to my hand when I was young. I became aware of some underlying idea deep in the obvious meaning of these love poems. I felt the joy of an explorer who suddenly discovers the key to the language lying

hidden in the hieroglyphs which are beautiful in themselves. I was sure that these poets were speaking about the supreme Lover, whose touch we experience in all our relations of love—the love of nature's beauty, of the animal, the child, the comrade, the beloved, the love that illuminates our consciousness of reality. They sang of a love that ever flows through numerous obstacles between men and Man the Divine, the eternal relation which has the relationship of mutual dependence for a fulfilment that needs perfect union of individuals and the Universal.

The Vaishnava poet sings of the Lover who has his flute which, with its different stops, gives out the varied notes of beauty and love that are in Nature and Man. These notes bring to us our message of invitation. They eternally urge us to come out from the seclusion of our self-centred life into the realm of love and truth. Are we deaf by nature, or is it that we have been deafened by the claims of the world, of self-seeking, by the clamorous noise of the market-place? We miss the voice of the Lover, and we fight, we rob, we exploit the weak, we chuckle at our cleverness, when we can appropriate for our use what is due to others; we make our lives a desert by turning away from our world that stream of love which pours down from the blue sky and wells up from the bosom of the earth.

In the region of Nature, by unlocking the secret doors of the workshop department, one may come to that dark hall where dwells the mechanic and help to attain usefulness, but through it one can never attain finality. Here is the storehouse of innumerable facts and, however necessary they may be, they have not the treasure of fulfilment in them. But the hall of union is there, where dwells the Lover in the heart of existence. When a man reaches it he at once realizes that he has come to Truth, to immortality, and he is glad with a gladness which is an end, and yet which has no end.

Mere information about facts, mere discovery of power, belongs to the outside and not to the inner soul of things. Gladness is the one criterion of truth, and we know when we have touched Truth by the music it gives, by the joy of greeting it sends forth to the truth in us. That is the true foundation of all religions. It is not as ether waves that we receive light; the morning does not wait for some scientist for its introduction to us. In the same way we touch the infinite reality immediately within us only when we perceive the pure truth of love or goodness, not through the explanations of theologians, not through the erudite discussion of ethical doctrines.

I have already made the confession that my religion is a poet's religion. All that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. Frankly, I acknowledge that I cannot satisfactorily answer any questions about evil, or about what happens after death. Nevertheless, I am sure that there have come moments in my own experience when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy. It has been said in our Upanishad that our mind and our words come away baffled from the Supreme Truth, but he who knows truth through the immediate joy of his own soul is saved from all doubts and fears.

In the night we stumble over things and become acutely conscious of their individual separateness. But the day reveals the greater unity which embraces them. The man whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness at once realizes the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences. His mind no longer awkwardly stumbles over individual facts of separateness in the human world, accepting them as final. He realizes that peace is in the inner harmony which dwells in truth and not in any outer adjustments. He knows that beauty carries an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN OF MY HEART

AT THE OUTBURST of an experience, which is unusual, such as happened to me in the beginning of my youth, the puzzled mind seeks its explanation in some settled foundation of that which is usual, trying to adjust an unexpected inner message to an organized belief which goes by the general name of a religion. And, therefore, I naturally was glad at that time of youth to accept from my father the post of secretary to a special section of the monotheistic church of which he was the leader. I took part in its services mainly by composing hymns which unconsciously took the many-thumbed impression of the orthodox mind, a composite smudge of tradition. Urged by my sense of duty I strenuously persuaded myself to think that my new mental attitude was in harmony with that of the members of our association, although I constantly stumbled upon obstacles and felt constraints that hurt me to the quick.

At last I came to discover that in my conduct I was not strictly loyal to my religion, but only to the religious institution. This latter represented an artificial average, with its standard of truth at its static minimum, jealous of any vital growth that exceeded its limits. I have my conviction that in religion, and also in the arts, that which is common to a group is not important. Indeed, very often it is a contagion of mutual imitation. After a long struggle with the feeling that I was using a mask to hide the living face of truth, I gave up my connection with our church.

About this time, one day I chanced to hear a song from a beggar belonging to the Baül sect of Bengal. We have in the modern Indian Religion deities of different names, forms and mythology, some Vedic and others aboriginal. They have their special sectarian idioms and associations that give emotional satisfaction to those who are accustomed to their hypnotic influences. Some of them may have their aesthetic value to me and others philosophical significance overcumbered by exuberant distraction of legendary myths. But what struck me in this simple song was a religious expression that was neither grossly concrete, full of crude details, nor metaphysical in its rarified transcendentalism. At the same time it was alive with an emotional sincerity. It spoke of an intense yearning of the heart for the divine which is in Man and not in the temple, or scriptures, in images and symbols. The worshipper addresses his songs to the Man the ideal, and says:

> Temples and mosques obstruct thy path,
> and I fail to hear thy call or to move,
> when the teachers and priest angrily crowd round me.

He does not follow any tradition of ceremony, but only believes in love. According to him:

> Love is the magic stone, that transmutes by its touch greed into sacrifice.

He goes on to say:

> For the sake of this love heaven longs to become earth and gods to become man.

Since then I have often tried to meet these people, and sought to understand them through their songs, which are their only form of worship. One is often surprised to find in many of these verses a striking originality of sentiment and diction; for, at their best, they are spontaneously individual in their expressions. One such song is a hymn to the Ever Young. It exclaims:

> O my flower buds, we worship the Young;
> for the Young is the source of the holy Ganges of life;
> from the Young flows the supreme bliss

And it says:

> We never offer ripe corn in the service of the Young,
> nor fruit, nor seed,
> but only the lotus bud which is of our own mind.
> The young hour of the day, the morning,
> is our time for the worship of Him.
> from whose contemplation has sprung the Universe.

It calls the Spirit of the Young the *Brahma Kamal*, 'the infinite lotus'. For it is something which has perfection in its heart and yet ever grows and unfolds its petals.

There have been men in India who never wrote learned texts about the religion of Man but had an overpowering desire and practical training for its attainment. They bore in their life the testimony of their intimacy with the Person who is in all persons, of Man the formless in the individual forms of men. Rajjab, poet-saint of medieval India, says of Man:

> God-man (*nara-nārāyana*) is thy definition, it is not a delusion but truth. In thee the infinite seeks the finite, the perfect knowledge seeks love, and when the form and the Formless (the individual and the universal) are united love is fulfilled in devotion.

Ravidas, another poet of the same age, sings:

> Thou seest me, O Divine Man (*narahari*), and I see thee, and our love becomes mutual.

Of this God-man a village poet of Bengal says:

> He is within us, an unfathomable reality. We know him when we unlock our own self and meet in a true love with all others.

A brother poet of his says:

> Man seeks the man in me and I lose myself and run out.

And another singer sings of the Ideal Man, and says:

How could the scripture know the meaning of the Lord who has his play in the world of human forms?
Listen, O brother man (declares Chandidas), the truth of man is the highest truth, there is no other truth above it.

All these are proofs of a direct perception of humanity as an objective truth that rouses a profound feeling of longing and love. This is very unlike what we find in the intellectual cult of humanity, which is like a body that has tragically lost itself in the purgatory of shadows.

Wordsworth says:

We live by admiration, hope and love,
And ever as these are well and wisely fixed
In dignity of being we ascend.

It is for dignity of being that we aspire through the expansion of our consciousness in a great reality of man to which we belong. We realize it through admiration and love, through hope that soars beyond the actual, beyond our own span of life into an endless time wherein we live the life of all men.

This is the infinite perspective of human personality where man finds his religion. Science may include in its field of knowledge the starry world and the world beyond it; philosophy may try to find some universal principle which is at the root of all things, but religion inevitably concentrates itself on humanity, which illumines our reason, inspires our wisdom, stimulates our love, claims our intelligent service. There is an impersonal idea, which we call law, discoverable by an impersonal logic in its pursuit of the fathomless depth of the hydrogen atom and the distant virgin worlds clothed in eddying fire. But as the physiology of our beloved is not our beloved, so this impersonal law is not our God, the *Pitritamah pitrinam*, the Father who is ultimate in all fathers and mothers, of him we cannot say:

Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevayā—

Realize him by obeisance, by the desire to know, by service—

For this can only be relevant to the God who is God and man at the same time; and if this faith be blamed for being anthropomorphic, then Man is to be blamed for being Man, and the lover for loving his dear one as a person instead of as a principle of psychology. We can never go beyond Man in all that we know and feel, and a mendicant singer of Bengal has said:

Our world is as it is in our comprehension; the thought and existence are commingled. Everything would be lost in unconsciousness if man were nought; and when response comes to your own call you know the meaning of reality.

According to him, what we call nature is not a philosophical abstraction, not cosmos, but what is revealed to *man* as nature. In fact it is included in himself and therefore there is a commingling of his mind with it, and in that he finds

his own being. He is truly lessened in humanity if he cannot take it within him and through it feel the fulness of his own existence. His arts and literature are constantly giving expression to this intimate communion of man with his world. And the Vedic poet exclaims in his hymn to the sun:

> Thou who nourishest the earth, who walkest alone, O Sun, withdraw thy rays, reveal thy exceeding beauty to me and let me realize that the Person who is there is the One who I am.

It is for us to realize the Person who is in the heart of the All by the emancipated consciousness of our own personality. We know that the highest mission of science is to find the universe enveloped by the human comprehension; to see man's *visvarupa*, his great mental body, that touches the extreme verge of time and space, that includes the whole world within itself.

The original Aryans who came to India had for their gods the deities of rain, wind, fire, the cosmic forces which singularly enough found no definite shapes in images. A time came when it was recognized that individually they had no separate, unrelated power of their own, but there was one infinite source of power which was named Brahma. The cosmic divinity developed into an impersonal idea; what was physical grew into a metaphysical abstraction, even as in modern science matter vanishes into mathematics. And Brahma, according to those Indians, could neither be apprehended by mind nor described by words, even as matter in its ultimate analysis proves to be.

However satisfactory that idea might be as the unknowable principle relating to itself all the phenomena that are non-personal, it left the personal man in a void of negation. It cannot be gain-said that we can never realize things in this world from inside, we can but know how they appear to us. In fact, in all knowledge we know our own self in its condition of knowledge. And religion sought the highest value of man's existence in this self. For this is the only truth of which he is immediately conscious from within. And he said:

> *Purushãnna parã kinchit*
> *sã kãshthtã sã para gãtih*
>
> Nothing is greater than the Person; he is the supreme, he is the ultimate goal.

It is a village poet of East Bengal who preaches in a song the philosophical doctrine that the universe has its reality in its relation to the Person, which I translate in the following lines:

> The sky and the earth are born of mine own eyes,
> The hardness and softness, the cold and the heat are the products of mine own body,
> The sweet smell and the bad are of my own nostrils.

This poet sings of the Eternal Person within him, coming out and appearing before his eyes, just as the Vedic Rishi speaks of the Person, who is in him, dwelling also in the heart of the sun:

I have seen the vision,
the vision of mine own revealing itself,
coming out from within me.

In India, there are those whose endeavour is to merge completely their personal self in an impersonal entity which is without any quality or definition; to reach a condition wherein mind becomes perfectly blank, losing all its activities. Those who claim the right to speak about it say that this is the purest state of consciousness, it is all joy and without any object or content. This is considered to be the ultimate end of *Yoga*, the cult of union, thus completely to identify one's being with the infinite Being who is beyond all thoughts and words. Such realization of transcendental consciousness accompanied by a perfect sense of bliss is a time-honoured tradition in our country, carrying in it the positive evidence which cannot be denied by any negative argument of refutation. Without disputing its truth I maintain that it may be valuable as a great psychological experience but all the same it is not religion, even as the knowledge of the ultimate state of the atom is of no use to an artist who deals in images in which atoms have taken forms. A certain condition of vacuum is needed for studying the state of things in its original purity, and the same may be said of the human spirit; but the original state is not necessarily the perfect state. The concrete form is a more perfect manifestation than the atom, and man is more perfect as a man than where he vanishes in an original indefiniteness. This is why the Ishopanishat says: 'Truth is both finite and infinite at the same time, it moves and yet moves not, it is in the distant, also in the near, it is within all objects and without them.'

This means that perfection as the ideal is immovable, but in its aspect of the real it constantly grows towards completion, it moves. And I say of the Supreme Man, that he is infinite in his essence, he is finite in his manifestation in us the individuals. As the Ishopanishat declares, a man must live his full term of life and work without greed, and thus realize himself in the Being who is in all beings. This means that he must reveal in his own personality the Supreme Person by his disinterested activities.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MUSIC MAKER

A PARTICLE OF sand would be nothing if it did not have its background in the whole physical world. This grain of sand is known in its context of the universe where we know all things through the testimony of our senses. When I say the grain of sand *is*, the whole physical world stands guarantee for the truth which is behind the appearance of the sand.

But where is that guarantee of truth for this personality of mine that has the mysterious faculty of knowledge before which the particle of sand offers its credential of identification? It must be acknowledged that this personal self of mine also has for its truth a background of personality where knowledge, unlike that of other things, can only be immediate and self-revealed.

What I mean by personality is a self-conscious principle of transcendental unity within man which comprehends all the details of facts that are individually his in knowledge and feeling, wish and will and work. In its negative aspect it is limited to the individual separateness, while in its positive aspect it ever extends itself in the infinite through the increase of its knowledge, love and activities.

And for this reason the most human of all facts about us is that we *do* dream of the limitless unattained—the dream which gives character to what *is* attained. Of all creatures man lives in an endless future. Our present is only a part of it. The ideas unborn, the unbodied spirits, tease our imagination with an insistence which makes them more real to our mind than things around us. The atmosphere of the future must always surround our present in order to make it life-bearing and suggestive of immortality. For he who has the healthy vigour of humanity in him has a strong instinctive faith that ideally he is limitless. That is why our greatest teachers claim from us a manifestation that touches the infinite. In this they pay homage to the Supreme Man. And our true worship lies in our indomitable courage to be great and thus to represent the human divine and ever to keep open the path of freedom towards the unattained.

We Indians have had the sad experience in our own part of the world how timid orthodoxy, its irrational repressions and its accumulation of dead centuries, dwarfs man through its idolatry of the past. Seated rigid in the centre of stagnation, it firmly ties the human spirit to the revolving wheels of habit till faintness overwhelms her. Like a sluggish stream choked by rotting weeds, it is divided into shallow slimy pools that shroud their dumbness in a narcotic mist of stupor. This mechanical spirit of tradition is essentially materialistic, it is blindly pious but not spiritual, obsessed by phantoms of unreason that haunt feeble minds in the ghastly disguise of religion. For our soul is shrunken when we allow foolish days to weave repeated patterns of unmeaning meshes round all departments of life. It becomes stunted when we have no object of profound interest, no prospect of heightened life, demand-

ing clarity of mind and heroic attention to maintain and mature it. It is destroyed when we make fireworks of our animal passions for the enjoyment of their meteoric sensations, recklessly reducing to ashes all that could have been saved for permanent illumination. This happens not only to mediocre individuals hugging fetters that keep them irresponsible or hungering for lurid unrealities, but to generations of insipid races that have lost all emphasis of significance in themselves, having missed their future.

The continuous future is the domain of our millennium, which is with us more truly than what we see in our history in fragments of the present. It is in our dream. It is in the realm of the faith which creates perfection. We have seen the records of man's dreams of the millennium, the ideal reality cherished by forgotten races in their admiration, hope and love manifested in the dignity of their being through some majesty in ideals and beauty in performance. While these races pass away one after another they leave great accomplishments behind them carrying their claim to recognition as dreamers—not so much as conquerors of earthly kingdoms, but as the designers of paradise. The poet gives us the best definition of man when he says:

> We are the music-makers,
> We are the dreamers of dreams.

Our religious present for us the dreams of the ideal unity which is man himself as he manifests the infinite. We suffer from the sense of sin, which is the sense of discord, when any disruptive passion tears gaps in our vision of the One in man, creating isolation in our self from the universal humanity.

The Upanishad says, *mā gridah*, 'covet not'. For coveting diverts attention from the infinite value of our personality to the temptation of materials. Our village poet sings: 'Man will brightly flash into your sight, my heart, if you shut the door of desires.'

We have seen how primitive man was occupied with his physical needs, and thus restricted himself to the present which is the time boundary of the animal; and he missed the urge of his consciousness to seek its emancipation in a world of ultimate human value.

Modern civilization for the same reason seems to turn itself back to that primitive mentality. Our needs have multiplied so furiously fast that we have lost our leisure for the deeper realization of our self and our faith in it. It means that we have lost our religion, the longing for the touch of the divine in man, the builder of the heaven, the music-maker, the dreamer of dreams. This has made it easy to tear into shreds our faith in the perfection of the human ideal, in its wholeness, as the fuller meaning of reality. No doubt it is wonderful that music contains a fact which has been analysed and measured, and which music shares in common with the braying of an ass or of a motor-car horn. But it is still more wonderful that music has a truth, which cannot be analysed into fractions; and there the difference between it and the bellowing impertinence of a motor-car horn is infinite. Men of our own times have analysed the human

mind, its dreams, its spiritual aspirations,—most often caught unawares in the shattered state of madness, disease and desultory dreams—and they have found to their satisfaction that these are composed of elemental animalities tangled into various knots. This may be an important discovery; but what is still more important to realize is the fact that by some miracle of creation man infinitely transcends the component parts of his own character.

Suppose that some psychological explorer suspects that man's devotion to his beloved has at bottom our primitive stomach's hankering for human flesh, we need not contradict him; for whatever may be its genealogy, its secret composition, the complete character of our love, in its perfect mingling of physical, mental and spiritual associations, is unique in its utter difference from cannibalism. The truth underlying the possibility of such transmutation is the truth of our religion. A lotus has in common with a piece of rotten flesh the elements of carbon and hydrogen. In a state of dissolution there is no difference between them, but in a state of creation the difference is immense; and it is that difference which really matters. We are told that some of our most sacred sentiments hold hidden in them instincts contrary to what these sentiments profess to be. Such disclosures have the effect upon certain persons of the relief of a tension, even like the relaxation in death of the incessant strenuousness of life.

We find in modern literature that something like a chuckle of an exultant disillusionment is becoming contagious, and the knights-errant of the cult of arson are abroad, setting fire to our time-honoured altars of worship, proclaiming that the images enshrined on them, even if beautiful, are made of mud. They say that it has been found out that the appearances in human idealism are deceptive, that the underlying mud is real. From such a point of view, the whole of creation may be said to be a gigantic deception, and the billions of revolving electric specks that have the appearance of 'you' or 'me' should be condemned as bearers of false evidence.

But whom do they seek to delude? If it be beings like ourselves who possess some inborn criterion of the real, then to them these very appearances in their integrity must represent reality, and not their component electric specks. For them the rose must be more satisfactory as an object than its constituent gases, which can be tortured to speak against the evident identity of the rose. The rose, even like the human sentiment of goodness, or ideal of beauty, belongs to the realm of creation, in which all its rebellious elements are reconciled in a perfect harmony. Because these elements in their simplicity yield themselves to our scrutiny, we in our pride are inclined to give them the best prizes as actors in that mystery-play, the rose. Such an analysis is really only giving a prize to our own detective cleverness.

I repeat again that the sentiments and ideals which man in his process of self-creation has built up, should be recognized in their wholeness. In all our faculties or passions there is nothing which is absolutely good or bad; they all are the constituents of the great human personality. They are notes that are wrong when in wrong places; our education is to make them into chords that

may harmonize with the grand music of Man. The animal in the savage has been transformed into higher stages in the civilized man—in other words has attained a truer consonance with Man the divine, not through any elimination of the original materials, but through a magical grouping of them, through the severe discipline of art, the discipline of curbing and stressing in proper places, establishing a balance of lights and shadows in the background and foreground, and thus imparting a unique value to our personality in all its completeness.

So long as we have faith in this value, our energy is steadily sustained in its creative activity that reveals the eternal Man. This faith is helped on all sides by literature, arts, legends, symbols, ceremonials, by the remembrance of heroic souls who have personified it in themselves.

Our religion is the inner principle that comprehends these endeavours and expressions and dreams through which we approach Him in whose image we are made. To keep alive our faith in the reality of the ideal perfection is the function of civilization, which is mainly formed of sentiments and the images that represent that ideal. In other words, civilization is a creation of art, created for the objective realization of our vision of the spiritually perfect. It is the product of the art of religion. We stop its course of conquest when we accept the cult of realism and forget that realism is the worst form of untruth, because it contains a minimum of truth. It is like preaching that only in the morgue can we comprehend the reality of the human body—the body which has its perfect revelation when seen in life. All great human facts are surrounded by an immense atmosphere of expectation. They are never complete if we leave out from them what might be, what should be, what is not yet proven but profoundly felt, what points towards the immortal. This dwells in a perpetual surplus in the individual, that transcends all the desultory facts about him.

The realism in Man is the animal in him, whose life is a mere duration of time; the human in him is his reality which has life everlasting for its background. Rocks and crystals being complete definitely in what they are, can keep as 'mute insensate things' a kind of dumb dignity in their stolidly limited realism; while human facts grow unseemly and diseased, breeding germs of death, when divested of their creative ideal—the ideal of Man the divine. The difference between the notes as mere facts of sound and music as a truth of expression is immense. For music though it comprehends a limited number of notes yet represents the infinite. It is for man to produce the music of the spirit with all the notes which he has in his psychology and which, through inattention or perversity, can easily be translated into a frightful noise. In music man is revealed and not in a noise.

CHAPTER IX

THE ARTIST

THE FUNDAMENTAL desire of life is the desire to exist. It claims from us a vast amount of training and experience about the necessaries of livelihood. Yet it does not cost me much to confess that the food that I have taken, the dress that I wear, the house where I have my lodging, represent a stupendous knowledge, practice and organization which I helplessly lack; for I find that I am not altogether despised for such ignorance and inefficiency. Those who read me seem fairly satisfied that I am nothing better than a poet or perhaps a philosopher—which latter reputation I do not claim and dare not hold through the precarious help of misinformation.

It is quite evident in spite of my deficiency that in human society I represent a vocation, which though superfluous has yet been held worthy of commendation. In fact, I am encouraged in my rhythmic futility by being offered moral and material incentives for its cultivation. If a foolish blackbird did not know how to seek its food, to build its nest, or to avoid its enemies, but specialized in singing, its fellow creatures, urged by their own science of genetics, would dutifully allow it to starve and perish. That I am not treated in a similar fashion is the evidence of an immense difference between the animal existence and the civilization of man. His great distinction dwells in the indefinite margin of life in him which affords a boundless background for his dreams and creations. And it is in this realm of freedom that he realizes his divine dignity, his great human truth, and is pleased when I as a poet sing victory to him, to Man the self-revealer, who goes on exploring ages of creation to find himself in perfection.

Reality, in all its manifestations, reveals itself in the emotional and imaginative background of our mind. We know it, not because we can think of it, but because we directly feel it. And therefore, even if rejected by the logical mind, it is not banished from our consciousness. As an incident it may be beneficial or injurious, but as a revelation its value lies in the fact that it offers us an experience through emotion or imagination; we feel ourselves in a special field of realization. This feeling itself is delightful when it is not accompanied by any great physical or moral risk, we love to feel even fear or sorrow if it is detached from all practical consequences. This is the reason of our enjoyment of tragic dramas, in which the feeling of pain rouses our consciousness to a white heat of intensity.

The reality of my own self is immediate and indubitable to me. Whatever else affects me in a like manner is real for myself, and it inevitably attracts and occupies my attention for its own sake, blends itself with my personality, making it richer and larger and causing it delight. My friend may not be beautiful, useful, rich or great, but he is real to me; in him I feel my own extension and my joy.

The consciousness of the real within me seeks for its own corroboration

the touch of the Real outside me. When it fails the self in me is depressed. When our surroundings are monotonous and insignificant, having no emotional reaction upon our mind, we become vague to ourselves. For we are like pictures, whose reality is helped by the background if it is sympathetic. The punishment we suffer in solitary confinement consists in the obstruction to the relationship between the world of reality and the real in ourselves, causing the latter to become indistinct in a haze of inactive imagination: our personality is blurred, we miss the companionship of our own being through the diminution of our self. The world of our knowledge is enlarged for us through the extension of our information; the world of our personality grows in its area with a large and deeper experience of our personal self in our own universe through sympathy and imagination.

At this world, that can be known through knowledge, is limited to us owing to our ignorance, so the world of personality, that can be realized by our own personal self, is also restricted by the limit of our sympathy and imagination. In the dim twilight of insensitiveness a large part of our world remains to us like a procession of nomadic shadows. According to the stages of our consciousness we have more or less been able to identify ourselves with this world, if not as a whole, at least in fragments; and our enjoyment dwells in that wherein we feel ourselves thus united. In art we express the delight of this unity by which this world is realized as humanly significant to us. I have my physical, chemical and biological self; my knowledge of it extends through the extension of my knowledge of the physical, chemical and biological world. I have my personal self, which has its communication with our feelings, sentiments and imaginations, which lends itself to be coloured by our desires and shaped by our imageries.

Science urges us to occupy by our mind the immensity of the knowable world; our spiritual teacher enjoins us to comprehend by our soul the infinite Spirit which is in the depth of the moving and changing facts of the world; the urging of our artistic nature is to realize the manifestation of personality in the world of appearance, the reality of existence which is in harmony with the real within us. Where this harmony is not deeply felt, there we are aliens and perpetually homesick. For man by nature is an artist; he never receives passively and accurately in his mind a physical representation of things around him. There goes on a continual adaptation, a transformation of facts into human imagery, through constant touches of his sentiments and imagination. The animal has the geography of its birthplace; man has his country, the geography of his personal self. The vision of it is not merely physical; it has its artistic unity, it is a perpetual creation. In his country, his consciousness being unobstructed, man extends his relationship, which is of his own creative personality. In order to live efficiently man must know facts and their laws. In order to be happy he must establish harmonious relationship with all things with which he has dealings. Our creation is the modification of relationship.

The great men who appear in our history remain in our mind not as a static fact but as a living historical image. The sublime suggestions of their lives

become blended into a noble consistency in legends made living in the life of ages. Those men with whom we live we constantly modify in our minds, making them more real to us than they would be in a bare presentation. Men's ideal of womanhood and women's ideal of manliness are created by the imagination through a mental grouping of qualities and conducts according to our hopes and desires, and men and women consciously and unconsciously strive towards its attainment. In fact, they reach a degree of reality for each other according to their success in adapting these respective ideals to their own nature. To say that these ideals are imaginary and therefore not true is wrong in man's case. His true life is in his own creation, which represents the infinity of man. He is naturally indifferent to things that merely exist; they must have some ideal value for him, and then only his consciousness fully recognizes them as real. Men are never true in their isolated self, and their imagination is the faculty that brings before their mind the vision of their own greater being.

We can make truth ours by actively modulating its inter-relations. This is the work of art; for reality is not based in the substance of things but in the principal of relationship. Truth is the infinite pursued by metaphysics; fact is the infinite pursued by science, while reality is the definition of the infinite which relates truth to the person. Reality is human; it is what we are conscious of, by which we are affected, that which we express. When we are intensely aware of it, we are aware of ourselves and it gives us delight. We live in it, we always widen its limits. Our arts and literature represent this creative activity which is fundamental in man.

But the mysterious fact about it is that though the individuals are separately seeking their expression, their success is never individualistic in character. Men must find and feel and represent in all their creative works Man the Eternal, the creator. Their civilization is a continual discovery of the transcendental humanity. In whatever it fails it shows the failure of the artist, which is the failure in expression; and that civilization perishes in which the individual thwarts the revelation of the universal. For Reality is the truth of Man, who belongs to all times, and any individualistic madness of men against Man cannot thrive for long.

Man is eager that his feeling for what is real to him must never die; it must find an imperishable form. The consciousness of this self of mine is so intensely evident to me that it assumes the character of immortality. I cannot imagine that it ever has been or can be non-existent. In a similar manner all things that are real to me are for myself eternal, and therefore worthy of a language that has permanent meaning. We know individuals who have the habit of inscribing their names on the walls of some majestic monument of architecture. It is a pathetic way of associating their own names with some works of art which belong to all times and to all men. Our hunger for reputation comes from our desire to make objectively real that which is inwardly real to us. He who is inarticulate is insignificant, like a dark star that cannot prove itself. He ever waits for the artist to give him his fullest worth, not

for anything specially excellent in him but for the wonderful fact that he is what he certainly is, that he carries in him the eternal mystery of being.

A Chinese friend of mine while travelling with me in the streets of Peking suddenly exclaimed with a vehement enthusiasm: 'Look, here is a donkey!' Surely it was an utterly ordinary donkey, like an indisputable truism, needing no special introduction from him. I was amused; but it made me think. This animal is generally classified as having certain qualities that are not recommendable and then hurriedly dismissed. It was obscured to me by an envelopment of commonplace associations; I was lazily certain that I knew it and therefore I hardly saw it. But my friend, who possessed the artist mind of China, did not treat it with a cheap knowledge but could see it afresh and recognize it as real. When I say real, I mean that it did not remain at the outskirt of his consciousness tied to a narrow definition, but it easily blended in his imagination, produced a vision, a special harmony of lines, colours and life and movement, and became intimately his own. The admission of a donkey into a drawing-room is violently opposed; yet there is no prohibition against its finding a place in a picture which may be admiringly displayed on the drawing-room wall.

The only evidence of truth in art exists when it compels us to say 'I see'. A donkey we may pass by in Nature, but a donkey in art we must acknowledge even if it be a creature that disreputably ignores all its natural history responsibility, even if it resembles a mushroom in its head and a palm-leaf in its tail.

In the Upanishad it is said in a parable that there are two birds sitting on the same bough, one of which feeds and the other looks on. This is an image of the mutual relationship of the infinite being and the finite self. The delight of the bird which looks on is great, for it is a pure and free delight. There are both of these birds in man himself, the objective one with its business of life, the subjective one with its disinterested joy of vision.

A child comes to me and commands me to tell her a story. I tell her of a tiger which is disgusted with the black stripes on its body and comes to my frightened servant demanding a piece of soap. The story gives my little audience immense pleasure, the pleasure of a vision, and her mind cries out, 'It is here, for I see!' She *knows* a tiger in the book of natural history, but she can *see* the tiger in the story of mine.

I am sure that even this child of five knows that it is an impossible tiger that is out on its untigerly quest of an absurd soap. The delightfulness of the tiger for her is not in its beauty, its usefulness, or its probability; but in the undoubted fact that she can see it in her mind with a greater clearness of vision than she can the walls around her—the walls that brutally shout their evidence of certainty which is merely circumstantial. The tiger in the story is inevitable, it has the character of a complete image, which offers its testimonial of truth in itself. The listener's own mind is the eye-witness, whose direct experience could not be contradicted. A tiger must be like every other tiger in order that it may have its place in a book of Science; there it must be a commonplace tiger

to be at all tolerated. But in the story it is uncommon, it can never be reduplicated. We *know* a thing because it belongs to a class; we *see* a thing because it belongs to itself. The tiger of the story completely detached itself from all others of its kind and easily assumed a distinct individuality in the heart of the listener. The child could vividly see it, because by the help of her imagination it became her own tiger, one with herself, and this union of the subject and object gives us joy. Is it because there is no separation between them in truth, the separation being the *Maya*, which is creation?

There come in our history occasions when the consciousness of a large multitude becomes suddenly illumined with the recognition of a reality which rises far above the dull obviousness of daily happenings. The world becomes vivid; we see, we feel it with all our soul. Such an occasion there was when the voice of Buddha reached distant shores across physical and moral impediments. Then our life and our world found their profound meaning of reality in their relation to the central person who offered us emancipation of love. Men, in order to make this great human experience ever memorable, determined to do the impossible; they made rocks to speak, stones to sing, caves to remember; their cry of joy and hope took immortal forms along the hills and deserts, across barren solitudes and populous cities. A gigantic creative endeavour built up its triumph in stupendous carvings, defying obstacles that were overwhelming. Such heroic activity over the greater part of the Eastern continents clearly answers the question: 'What is Art?' It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real.

Once there came a time, centuries ago in Bengal, when the divine love drama that has made its eternal playground in human souls was vividly revealed by a personality radiating its intimate realization of God. The mind of a whole people was stirred by a vision of the world as an instrument, through which sounded out invitation to the meeting of bliss. The ineffable mystery of God's love-call, taking shape in an endless panorama of colours and forms, inspired activity in music that overflowed the restrictions of classical conventionalism. Our Kirtan music of Bengal came to its being like a star flung up by a burning whirlpool of emotion in the heart of a whole people, and their consciousness was aflame with a sense of reality that must be adequately acknowledged.

The question may be asked as to what place music occupies in my theory that art is for evoking in our mind the deep sense of reality in its richest aspect. Music is the most abstract of all the arts, as mathematics is in the region of science. In fact these two have a deep relationship with each other. Mathematics is the logic of numbers and dimensions. It is therefore employed as the basis of our scientific knowledge. When taken out of its concrete associations and reduced to symbols, it reveals its grand structural majesty, the inevitableness of its own perfect concord. Yet there is not merely a logic but also a magic of mathematics which works at the world of appearance, producing harmony—the cadence of inter-relationship. This rhythm of harmony has been extracted from its usual concrete context, and exhibited through the medium of sound.

And thus the pure essence of expressiveness in existence is offered in music. Expressiveness finds the least resistance in sound, having freedom unencumbered by the burden of facts and thoughts. This gives it a power to arouse in us an intimate feeling of reality. In the pictorial, plastic and literary arts, the object and our feelings with regard to it are closely associated, like the rose and its perfumes. In music, the feeling distilled in sound, becoming itself an independent object. It assumes a tune-form which is definite, but a meaning which is undefinable, and yet which grips our mind with a sense of absolute truth.

It is the magic of mathematics, the rhythm which is in the heart of all creation, which moves in the atom and, in its different measures, fashions gold and lead, the rose and the thorn, the sun and the planets. These are the dance-steps of numbers in the arena of time and space, which weave the *maya*, the patterns of appearance, the incessant flow of change, that ever is and is not. It is the rhythm that churns up images from the vague and makes tangible what is elusive. This is *maya*, this is the art in creation, and art in literature, which is the magic of rhythm.

And must we stop here? What we know as intellectual truth, is that also not a rhythm of the relationship of facts, that weaves the pattern of theory, and produces a sense of convincingness to a person who somehow feels sure that he knows the truth? We believe any fact to be true because of a harmony, a rhythm in reason, the process of which is analysable by the logic of mathematics, but not its result in me, just as we can count the notes but cannot account for the music. The mystery is that I am convinced, and this also belongs to the *maya* of creation, whose one important, indispensable factor is this self-conscious personality that I represent.

And the Other? I believe it is also a self-conscious personality, which has its eternal harmony with mine.

CHAPTER X

MAN'S NATURE

FROM THE TIME when Man became truly conscious of his own self he also became conscious of a mysterious spirit of unity which found its manifestation through him in his society. It is a subtle medium of relationship between individuals, which is not for any utilitarian purpose but for its own ultimate truth, not a sum of arithmetic but a value of life. Somehow Man has felt that this comprehensive spirit of unity has a divine character which could claim the sacrifice of all that is individual in him, that in it dwells his highest meaning transcending his limited self, representing his best freedom.

Man's reverential loyalty to this spirit of unity is expressed in his religion; it is symbolized in the names of his deities. That is why, in the beginning, his gods were tribal gods, even gods of the different communities belonging to the same tribe. With the extension of the consciousness of human unity his God became revealed to him as one and universal, proving that the truth of human unity is the truth of Man's God.

In the Sanskrit language, religion goes by the name *dharma*, which in the derivative meaning implies the principle of relationship that holds us firm, and in its technical sense means the virtue of a thing, the essential quality of it; for instance, heat is the essential quality of fire, though in certain of its stages it may be absent.

Religion consists in the endeavour of men to cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of Man the Eternal, and to have faith in him. If these qualities were absolutely natural in individuals, religion could have no purpose. We begin our history with all the original promptings of our brute nature which helps us to fulfil those vital needs of ours that are immediate. But deeper within us there is a current of tendencies which runs in many ways in a contrary direction, the life current of universal humanity. Religion has its function in reconciling the contradiction, by subordinating the brute nature to what we consider as the truth of Man. This is helped when our faith in the Eternal Man, whom we call by different names and imagine in different images, is made strong. The contradiction between the two natures in us is so great that men have willingly sacrificed their vital needs and courted death in order to express their *dharma*, which represents the truth of the Supreme Man.

The vision of the Supreme Man is realized by our imagination, but not created by our mind. More real than individual men, he surpasses each of us in his permeating personality which is transcendental. The procession of his ideas, following his great purpose, is ever moving across obstructive facts towards the perfected truth. We, the individuals, having our place in his composition, may or may not be in conscious harmony with his purpose, may even put obstacles in his path bringing down our doom upon ourselves. But we gain our true religion when we consciously co-operate with him, finding

our exceeding joy through suffering and sacrifice. For through our own love for him we are made conscious of a great love that radiates from his being, who is Mahātma, the Supreme Spirit.

The great Chinese sage Lao-tze has said: 'One who may die, but will not perish, has life everlasting'. It means that he lives in the life of the immortal Man. The urging for this life induces men to go through the struggle for a true survival. And it has been said in our scripture: 'Through *adharma* (the negation of *dharma*) man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but he perishes at the root.' In this saying it is suggested that there is a life which is truer for men than their physical life which is transient.

Our life gains what is called 'value' in those of its aspects which represent eternal humanity in knowledge, in sympathy, in deeds, in character and creative works. And from the beginning of our history we are seeking often at the cost of everything else, the value for our life and not merely success; in other words, we are trying to realize in ourselves the immortal Man, so that we may die but not perish. This is the meaning of the utterance in the Upanishad: *Tam vedyam purusham veda, yatha ma vo mrityuh parivyathah*—'Realize the Person so that thou mayst not suffer from death.'

The meaning of these words is highly paradoxical, and cannot be proved by our senses or our reason, and yet its influence is so strong in men that they have cast away all fear and greed, defied all the instincts that cling to the brute nature, for the sake of acknowledging and preserving a life which belongs to the Eternal Person. It is all the more significant because many of them do not believe in its reality, and yet are ready to fling away for it all that they believe to be final and the only positive fact.

We call this ideal reality 'spiritual'. That word is vague; nevertheless, through the dim light which reaches us across the barriers of physical existence, we seem to have a stronger faith in the spiritual Man than in the physical; and from the dimmest period of his history, Man has a feeling that the apparent facts of existence are not final; that his supreme welfare depends upon his being able to remain in perfect relationship with some great mystery behind the veil, at the threshold of a larger life, which is for giving him a far higher value than a mere continuation of his physical life in the material world.

Our physical body has its comprehensive reality in the physical world, which may be truly called our universal body, without which our individual body would miss its function. Our physical life realizes its growing meaning through a widening freedom in its relationship with the physical world, and this gives it a greater happiness than the mere pleasure of satisfied needs. We become aware of a profound meaning of our own self at the consciousness of some ideal of perfection some truth beautiful or majestic which gives us an inner sense of completeness, a heightened sense of our own reality. This strengthens man's faith, effective even if indefinite—his faith in an objective ideal of perfection comprehending the human world. His vision of it has been beautiful or distorted, luminous or obscure, according to the stages of

development that his consciousness has attained. But whatever may be the name and nature of his religious creed, man's ideal of human perfection has been based upon a bond of unity running through individuals culminating in a supreme Being who represents the eternal in human personality. In his civilization the perfect expression of this idea produces the wealth of truth which is for the revelation of Man and not merely for the success of life. But when this creative ideal which is *dharma* gives place to some overmastering passion in a large body of men civilization bursts out in an explosive flame, like a star that has lighted its own funeral pyre of boisterous brilliancy.

When I was a child I had the freedom to make my own toys out of trifles and create my own games from imagination. In my happiness my playmates had their full share, in fact the complete enjoyment of my games depended upon their taking part in them. One day, in this paradise of our childhood, entered the temptation from the market world of the adult. A toy brought from an English shop was given to one of our companions; it was perfect, it was big and wonderfully life-like. He became proud of the toy and less mindful of the game; he kept that expensive thing carefully away from us, glorying in his exclusive possession of it, feeling himself superior to his playmates whose toys were cheap. I am sure if he could use the modern language of history he would say that he was more civilized than ourselves to the extent of his owning that ridiculously perfect toy.

One thing he failed to realize in his excitement—a fact which at the moment seemed to him insignificant—that this temptation obscured something a great deal more perfect than his toy, the revelation of the perfect child which ever dwells in the heart of man, in other words, the *dharma* of the child. The toy merely expressed his wealth but not himself, not the child's creative spirit, not the child's generous joy in his play, his identification of himself with others who were his compeers in his play world. Civilization is to express Man's *dharma* and not merely his cleverness, power and possession.

Once there was an occasion for me to motor down to Calcutta from a place a hundred miles away. Something wrong with the mechanism made it necessary for us to have a repeated supply of water almost every half-hour. At the first village where we were compelled to stop, we asked the help of a man to find water for us. It proved quite a task for him, but when we offered him his reward, poor though he was, he refused to accept it. In fifteen other villages the same thing happened. In a hot country, where travellers constantly need water and where the water supply grows scanty in summer, the villagers consider it their duty to offer water to those who need it. They could easily make a business out of it, following the inexorable law of demand and supply. But the ideal which they consider to be their *dharma* has become one with their life. They do not claim any personal merit for possessing it.

Lao-tze, speaking about the man who is truly good, says: 'He quickens but owns not. He acts but claims not. Merit he accomplishes but dwells not in it. Since he does not dwell in it, it will never leave him.' That which is outside ourselves we can sell; but that which is one with our being we cannot sell. This

complete assimilation of truth belongs to the paradise of perfection; it lies beyond the purgatory of self-consciousness. To have reached it proves a long process of civilization.

To be able to take a considerable amount of trouble in order to supply water to a passing stranger and yet never to claim merit or reward for it seems absurdly and negligibly simple compared with the capacity to produce an amazing number of things per minute. A millionaire tourist, ready to corner the food market and grow rich by driving the whole world to the brink of starvation, is sure to feel too superior to notice this simple thing while rushing through our villages at sixty miles an hour.

Yes, it is simple, as simple as it is for a gentleman to be a gentleman; but that simplicity is the product of centuries of culture. That simplicity is difficult of imitation. In a few years' time, it might be possible for me to learn how to make holes in thousands of needles simultaneously by turning a wheel, but to be absolutely simple in one's hospitality to one's enemy, or to a stranger, requires generations of training. Simplicity takes no account of its own value, claims no wages, and therefore those who are enamoured of power do not realize that simplicity of spiritual expression is the highest product of civilization.

A process of disintegration can kill this rare fruit of a higher life, as a whole race of birds possessing some rare beauty can be made extinct by the vulgar power of avarice which has civilized weapons. This fact was clearly proved to me when I found that the only place where a price was expected for the water given to us was a suburb at Calcutta, where life was richer, the water supply easier and more abundant and where progress flowed in numerous channels in all directions. It shows that a harmony of character which the people once had was lost—the harmony with the inner self which is greater in its universality than the self that gives prominence to its personal needs. The latter loses its feeling of beauty and generosity in its calculation of profit; for there it represents exclusively itself and not the universal man.

There is an utterance in the Atharva Veda, wherein appears the question as to who it was that gave Man his music. Birds repeat their single notes, or a very simple combination of them, but Man builds his world of music and establishes ever new rhythmic relationship of notes. These reveal to him a universal mystery of creation which cannot be described. They bring to him the inner rhythm that transmutes facts into truths. They give him pleasure not merely for his sense of hearing, but for his deeper being, which gains satisfaction in the ideal of perfect unity. Somehow man feels that truth finds its body in such perfection; and when he seeks for his own best revelation he seeks a medium which has the harmonious unity, as has music. Our impulse to give expression to Universal Man produces arts and literature. They in their cadence of lines, colours, movements, words, thoughts, express vastly more than what they appear to be on the surface. They open the windows of our mind to the eternal reality of man. They are the superfluity of wealth of which we claim our common inheritance whatever may be the country and time to

which we belong; for they are inspired by the universal mind. And not merely in his arts, but in his own behaviour, the individual must for his excellence give emphasis to an ideal which has some value of truth that ideally belongs to all men. In other words, he should create a music of expression in his conduct and surroundings which makes him represent the supreme Personality. And civilization is the creation of the race, its expression of the universal Man.

When I first visited Japan I had the opportunity of observing where the two parts of the human sphere strongly contrasted; one, on which grew up the ancient continents of social ideal, standards of beauty, codes of personal behaviour; and the other part, the fluid element, the perpetual current that carried wealth to its shores from all parts of the world. In half a century's time Japan has been able to make her own the mighty spirit of progress which suddenly burst upon her one morning in a storm of insult and menace. China also has had her rousing, when her self-respect was being knocked to pieces through series of helpless years, and I am sure she also will master before long the instrument which hurt her to the quick. But the ideals that imparted life and body to Japanese civilization had been nourished in the reverent hopes of countless generations through ages which were not primarily occupied in an incessant hunt for opportunities. They had those large tracts of leisure in them which are necessary for the blossoming of Life's beauty and the ripening of her wisdom.

On the one hand we can look upon the modern factories in Japan with their numerous mechanical organizations and engines of production and destruction of the latest type. On the other hand, against them we may see some fragile vase, some small piece of silk, some architecture of sublime simplicity, some perfect lyric of bodily movement. We may also notice the Japanese expression of courtesy daily extracting from them a considerable amount of time and trouble. All these have come not from any accurate knowledge of things but from an intense consciousness of the value of reality which takes time for its fullness. What Japan reveals in her skilful manipulation of telegraphic wires and railway lines, of machines for manufacturing things and for killing men, is more or less similar to what we see in other countries which have similar opportunity for training. But in her art of living, her pictures, her code of conduct, the various forms of beauty which her religious and social ideals assume Japan expresses her own personality, her *dharma*, which, in order to be of any worth, must be unique and at the same time represent Man of the Everlasting Life.

Lao-tze has said: 'Not knowing the eternal causes passions to rise; and that is evil'. He has also said: 'Let us die, and yet not perish'. For we die when we lose our physical life, we perish when we miss our humanity. And humanity is the *dharma* of human beings.

What is evident in this world is the endless procession of moving things; but what is to be realized, is the supreme human Truth by which the human world is permeated.

We must never forget to-day that a mere movement is not valuable in

itself, that it may be a sign of a dangerous form of inertia. We must be reminded that a great upheaval of spirit, a universal realization of true dignity of man once caused by Buddha's teachings in India, started a movement for centuries which produced illumination of literature, art, science and numerous efforts of public beneficence. This was a movement whose motive force was not some additional accession of knowledge or power or urging of some overwhelming passion. It was an inspiration for freedom, the freedom which enables us to realize *dharma*, the truth of Eternal Man.

Lao-tze in one of his utterances has said: 'Those who have virtue (*dharma*) attend to their obligations; those who have no virtue attend to their claims.' Progress which is not related to an inner *dharma*, but to an attraction which is external, seeks to satisfy our endless claims. But civilization, which is an ideal, gives us the abundant power to renounce which is the power that realizes the infinite and inspires creation.

This great Chinese sage has said: 'To increase life is called a blessing.' For, the increase of life realizes the eternal life and yet does not transcend the limits of life's unity. The mountain pine grows tall and great, its every inch maintains the rhythm of an inner balance, and therefore even in its seeming extravagance it has the reticent grace of self-control. The tree and its productions belong to the same vital system of cadence; the timber, the flowers, leaves and fruits are one with the tree; their exuberance is not a malady of exaggeration, but a blessing.

CHAPTER XI

THE MEETING

OUR GREAT PROPHETS in all ages did truly realize in themselves the freedom of the soul in their consciousness of the spiritual kinship of man which is universal. And yet human races, owing to their external geographical condition, developed in their individual isolation a mentality that is obnoxiously selfish. In their instinctive search for truth in religion either they dwarfed and deformed it in the mould of the primitive distortions of their own race-mind, or else they shut their God within temple walls and scriptural texts safely away, especially from those departments of life where his absence gives easy access to devil-worship in various names and forms. They treated their God in the same way as in some forms of government the King is treated, who has traditional honour but no effective authority. The true meaning of God has remained vague in our minds only because our consciousness of the spiritual unity has been thwarted.

One of the potent reasons for this—our geographical separation—has now been nearly removed. Therefore the time has come when we must, for the sake of truth and for the sake of that peace which is the harvest of truth, refuse to allow the idea of our God to remain indistinct behind unrealities of formal rites and theological mistiness.

The creature that lives its life screened and sheltered in a dark cave, finds its safety in the very narrowness of its own environment. The economical providence of Nature curtails and tones down its sensibilities to such a limited necessity. But if these cave-walls were to become suddenly removed by some catastrophe, then either it must accept the doom of extinction, or carry on satisfactory negotiations with its wider surroundings.

The races of mankind will never again be able to go back to their citadels of high-walled exclusiveness. They are to-day exposed to one another, physically and intellectually. The shells, which have so long given them full security within their individual enclosures have been broken, and by no artificial process can they be mended again. So we have to accept this fact, even though we have not yet fully adapted our minds to this changed environment of publicity, even though through it we may have to run all the risks entailed by the wider expansion of life's freedom.

A large part of our tradition is our code of adjustment which deals with the circumstances special to ourselves. These traditions, no doubt, variegate the several racial personalities with their distinctive colours—colours which have their poetry and also certain protective qualities suitable to each different environment. We may come to acquire a strong love for our own colourful race speciality; but if that gives us fitness only for a very narrow world, then, at the slightest variation in our outward circumstances, we may have to pay for this love with our life itself.

In the animal world there are numerous instances of complete race-

suicide overtaking those who fondly clung to some advantage which later on became a hindrance in an altered dispensation. In fact the superiority of man is proved by his adaptability to extreme surprises of chance—neither the torrid nor the frigid zone of his destiny offering him insuperable obstacles.

The vastness of the race problem with which we are faced to-day will either compel us to train ourselves to moral fitness in the place of merely external efficiency, or the complications arising out of it will fetter all our movements and drag us to our death.[1]

When our necessity becomes urgently insistent, when the resources that have sustained us so long are exhausted, then our spirit puts forth all its force to discover some other source of sustenance deeper and more permanent. This leads us from the exterior to the interior of our store-house. When muscle does not fully serve us, we come to awaken intellect to ask for its help and are then surprised to find in it a greater source of strength for us than physical power. When, in their turn, our intellectual gifts grow perverse, and only help to render our suicide gorgeous and exhaustive, our soul must seek an alliance with some power which is still deeper, yet further removed from the rude stupidity of muscle.

Hitherto the cultivation of intense race egotism is the one thing that has found its fullest scope at this meeting of men. In no period of human history has there been such an epidemic of moral perversity, such a universal churning up of jealousy, greed, hatred and mutual suspicion. Every people, weak or strong, is constantly indulging in a violent dream of rendering itself thoroughly hurtful to others. In this galloping competition of hurtfulness, on the slope of a bottomless pit, no nation dares to stop or slow down. A scarlet fever with a raging temperature has attacked the entire body of mankind, and political passion has taken the place of creative personality in all departments of life.

It is well known that when greed has for its object material gain then it can have no end. It is like the chasing of the horizon by a lunatic. To go on in a competition multiplying millions becomes a steeplechase of insensate futility that has obstacles but no goal. It has for its parallel the fight with material weapons—weapons which must perpetually be multiplied, opening up new vistas of destruction and evoking new forms of insanity in the forging of frightfulness. Thus seems now to have commenced the last fatal adventure of drunken Passion riding on an intellect of prodigious power.

To-day, more than ever before in our history, the aid of spiritual power is needed. Therefore, I believe its resources will surely be discovered in the hidden depths of our being. Pioneers will come to take up this adventure and suffer, and through suffering open out a path to that higher elevation of life in which lies our safety.

Let me, in reference to this, give an instance from the history of Ancient India. There was a noble period in the early days of India when, to a band of dreamers, agriculture appeared as a great idea and not merely useful fact. The

[1] See Appendix IV.

heroic personality of Ramachandra, who espoused its cause, was sung in popular ballads, which in a later age forgot their original message and were crystallized into an epic merely extolling some domestic virtues of its hero. It is quite evident, however, from the legendary relics lying entombed in the story, that a new age ushered in by the spread of agriculture came as a divine voice to those who could hear. It lifted up the primeval screen of the wilderness, brought the distant near, and broke down all barricades. Men who had formed separate and antagonistic groups in their sheltered seclusions were called upon to form a united people.

In the Vedic verses, we find constant mention of conflicts between the original inhabitants of Ancient India and the colonists. There we find the expression of a spirit that was one of mutual distrust and a struggle in which was sought either wholesale slavery or extermination for the opponents carried on in the manner of animals who live in the narrow segregation imposed upon them by their limited imagination and imperfect sympathy. This spirit would have continued in all its ferocious vigour of savagery had men failed to find the opportunity for the discovery that man's highest truth was in the union of co-operation and love.

The progress of agriculture was the first external step which led to such a discovery. It not only made a settled life possible for a large number of men living in close proximity, but it claimed for its very purpose a life of peaceful co-operation. The mere fact of such a sudden change from a nomadic to an agricultural condition would not have benefited Man if he had not developed therewith his spiritual sensitiveness to an inner principle of truth. We can realize, from our reading of the Ramayana, the birth of idealism among a section of the Indian colonists of those days, before whose mind's eye was opened a vision of emancipation rich with the responsibility of a higher life. The epic represents in its ideal the change of the people's aspiration from the path of conquest to that of reconciliation.

At the present time, as I have said, the human world has been overtaken by another vast change similar to that which had occurred in the epic age of India. So long men had been cultivating, almost with a religious fervour, that mentality which is the product of racial isolation; poets proclaimed, in a loud pitch of bragging, the exploits of their popular fighters; money-makers felt neither pity nor shame in the unscrupulous dexterity of their pocket-picking; diplomats scattered lies in order to reap concessions from the devastated future of their own victims. Suddenly the walls that separated the different races are seen to have given way, and we find ourselves standing face to face.

This is a great fact of epic significance. Man, suckled at the wolf's breast, sheltered in the brute's den, brought up in the prowling habit of depredation, suddenly discovers that he is Man, and that his true power lies in yielding up his brute power for the freedom of spirit.

The God of humanity has arrived at the gates of the ruined temple of the tribe. Though he has not yet found his altar, I ask the men of simple faith, wherever they may be in the world, to bring their offering of sacrifice to him,

and to believe that it is far better to be wise and worshipful than to be clever and supercilious. I ask them to claim the right of manhood to be friends of men, and not the right of a particular proud race or nation which may boast of the fatal quality of being the rulers of men. We should know for certain that such rulers will no longer be tolerated in the new world, as it basks in the open sunlight of mind and breathes life's free air.

In the geological ages of the infant earth the demons of physical force had their full sway. The angry fire, the devouring flood, the fury of the storm, continually kicked the earth into frightful distortions. These titans have at last given way to the reign of life. Had there been spectators in those days who were clever and practical they would have wagered their last penny on these titans and would have waxed hilariously witty at the expense of the helpless living speck taking its stand in the arena of the wrestling giants. Only a dreamer could have then declared with unwavering conviction that those titans were doomed because of their very exaggeration, as are, to-day, those formidable qualities which, in the parlance of schoolboy science, are termed Nordic.

I ask once again, let us, the dreamers of the East and the West, keep our faith firm in the Life that creates and not in the Machine that constructs—in the power that hides its force and blossoms in beauty, and not in the power that bares its arms and chuckles at its capacity to make itself obnoxious. Let us know that the Machine is good when it helps, but not so when it exploits life; that Science is great when it destroys evil, but not when the two enter into unholy alliance.

CHAPTER XII

THE TEACHER

I HAVE ALREADY described how the nebulous idea of the divine essence condensed in my consciousness into a human realization. It is definite and finite at the same time, the Eternal Person manifested in all persons. It may be one of the numerous manifestations of God, the one in which is comprehended Man and his Universe. But we can never know or imagine him as revealed in any other inconceivable universe so long as we remain human beings. And therefore, whatever character our theology may ascribe to him, in reality he is the infinite ideal of Man towards whom men move in their collective growth, with whom they seek their union of love as individuals, in whom they find their ideal of father, friend and beloved.

I am sure that it was this idea of the divine Humanity unconsciously working in my mind, which compelled me to come out of the seclusion of my literary career and take my part in the world of practical activities. The solitary enjoyment of the infinite in meditation no longer satisfied me, and the texts which I used for my silent worship lost their inspiration without my knowing it. I am sure I vaguely felt that my need was spiritual self-realization in the life of Man through some disinterested service. This was the time when I founded an educational institution for our children in Bengal. It has a special character of its own which is still struggling to find its fulfilment; for it is a living temple that I have attempted to build for my divinity. In such a place education necessarily becomes the preparation for a complete life of man which can only become possible by living that life, through knowledge and service, enjoyment and creative work. The necessity was my own, for I felt impelled to come back into a fulness of truth from my exile in a dream-world.

This brings to my mind the name of another poet of ancient India, Kalidasa, whose poem of Meghaduta reverberates with the music of the sorrow of an exile.

It was not the physical home-sickness form which the poet suffered, it was something far more fundamental, the home-sickness of the soul. We feel from almost all his works the oppressive atmosphere of the kings' palaces of those days, dense with things of luxury, and also with the callousness of self-indulgence, albeit an atmosphere of refined culture based on an extravagant civilization.

The poet in the royal court lived in banishment—banishment from the immediate presence of the eternal. He knew it was not merely his own banishment, but that of the whole age to which he was born, the age that had gathered its wealth and missed its well-being, built its storehouse of things and lost its background of the great universe. What was the form in which his desire for perfection persistently appeared in his drama and poems? It was the form of the *tapovana*, the forest-dwelling of the patriarchal community of ancient India. Those who are familiar with Sanskrit literature will know that this was

not a colony of people with a primitive culture and mind. They were seekers after truth, for the sake of which they lived in an atmosphere of purity but not of Puritanism, of the simple life but not the life of self-mortification. They never advocated celibacy and they had constant intercommunication with other people who lived the life of worldly interest. Their aim and endeavour have briefly been suggested in the Upanishad in these lines:

Te sarvagam sarvatah prapya dhira
yuktatmanah sarvamevavisanti.

Those men of serene mind enter into the All, having realized and being in union everywhere with the omnipresent Spirit.

It was never a philosophy of renunciation of a negative character, but a realization completely comprehensive. How the tortured mind of Kalidasa in the prosperous city of Ujjaini, and the glorious period of Vikramaditya, closely pressed by all-obstructing things and all-devouring self, let his thoughts hover round the vision of a *tapovana* for his inspiration of life!

It was not a deliberate copy but a natural coincidence that a poet of modern India also had the similar vision when he felt within him the misery of a spiritual banishment. In the time of Kalidasa the people vividly believed in the ideal of *tapovana*, the forest colony, and there can be no doubt that even in the late age there were communities of men living in the heart of nature, not ascetics fiercely in love with a lingering suicide, but men of serene sanity who sought to realize the spiritual meaning of their life. And, therefore, when Kalidasa sang of the *tapovana*, his poems found their immediate communion in the living faith of his hearers. But to-day the idea has lost any definite outline of reality, and has retreated into the far away phantom-land of legend. Therefore the Sanskrit word in a modern poem would merely be poetical, its meaning judged by a literary standard of appraisement. Then, again, the spirit of the forest-dwelling in the purity of its original shape would be a fantastic anachronism in the present age, and therefore, in order to be real, it must find its reincarnation under modern conditions of life. It must be the same in truth, but not identical in fact. It was this which made the modern poet's heart crave to compose his poem in a language of tangible words.

But I must give the history in some detail. Civilized man has come far away from the orbit of his normal life. He has gradually formed and intensified some habits that are like those of the bees for adapting himself to his hive-world. We often see men suffering from ennui, from world-weariness, from a spirit of rebellion against their environment for no reasonable cause whatever. Social revolutions are constantly ushered in with a suicidal violence that has its origin in our dissatisfaction with our hive-wall arrangement—the too exclusive enclosure that deprives us of the perspective which is so much needed to give us the proper proportion in our art of living. All this is an indication that man has not been moulded on the model of the bee and therefore he becomes recklessly anti-social when his freedom to be more than social is ignored.

In our highly complex modern condition mechanical forces are organized with such efficiency that materials are produced that grow far in advance of man's selective and assimilative capacity to simplify them into harmony with his nature and needs.

Such an intemperate overgrowth of things, like rank vegetation in the tropics, creates confinement for man. The nest is simple, it has an early relationship with the sky; the cage is complex and costly; it is too much itself excommunicated from whatever lies outside. And man is building his cage, fast developing his parasitism on the monster Thing, which he allows to envelop him on all sides. He is always occupied in adapting himself to its dead angularities, limits himself to its limitations, and merely becomes a part of it.

This may seem contrary to the doctrine of those who believe that a constant high pressure of living, produced by an artificially cultivated hunger of things, generates and feeds the energy that drives civilization upon its endless journey. Personally, I do not believe that this has ever been the principal driving force that has led to eminence any great civilization of which we know in history.

I was born in what was once the metropolis of British India. My own ancestors came floating to Calcutta upon the earliest tide of the fluctuating fortune of the East India Company. The unconvential code of life for our family has been a confluence of three cultures, the Hindu, Mohammedan and British. My grandfather belonged to that period when the amplitude of dress and courtesy and a generous leisure were gradually being clipped and curtailed into Victorian manners, economical in time, in ceremonies, and in the dignity of personal appearance. This will show that I came to a world in which the modern citybred spirit of progress had just begun driving its triumphal car over the luscious green life of our ancient village community. Though the trampling process was almost complete round me, yet the wailing cry of the past was still lingering over the wreckage.

Often I had listened to my eldest brother describing with the poignancy of a hopeless regret a society hospitable, sweet with the old-world aroma of natural kindliness, full of simple faith and the ceremonial-poetry of life. But all this was a vanishing shadow behind me in the dusky golden haze of a twilight horizon—the all-pervading fact around my boyhood being the modern city newly built by a company of western traders and the spirit of the modern time seeking its unaccustomed entrance into our life, stumbling against countless anomalies.

But it always is a surprise to me to think that though this closed-up hardness of a city was my only experience of the world, yet my mind was constantly haunted by the home-sick fancies of an exile. It seems that the subconscious remembrance of a primeval dwelling-place, where, in our ancestor's minds, were figured and voiced the mysteries of the inarticulate rocks, the rushing water and the dark whispers of the forest, was constantly stirring my blood with its call. Some shadow-haunting living reminiscence in me seemed to ache for the pre-natal cradle and playground it shared with the primal life

in the illimitable magic of the land, water and air. The shrill, thin cry of the high-flying kite in the blazing sun of the dazed Indian midday sent to a solitary boy the signal of a dumb distant kinship. The few coconut plants growing by the boundary wall of our house, like some war captives from an older army of invaders of this earth, spoke to me of the eternal companionship which the great brotherhood of trees has ever offered to man.

Looking back upon those moments of my boyhood days, when all my mind seemed to float poised upon a large feeling of the sky, of the light, and to tingle with the brown earth in its glistening grass, I cannot help believing that my Indian ancestry had left deep in my being the legacy of its philosophy—the philosophy which speaks of fulfilment through our harmony with all things. The founding of my school had its origin in the memory of that longing for the freedom of consciousness, which seems to go back beyond the skyline of my birth.

Freedom in the mere sense of independence has no content, and therefore no meaning. Perfect freedom lies in a perfect harmony of relationship, which we realize in this world not through our response to it in knowing, but in being. Objects of knowledge maintain an infinite distance from us who are the knowers. For knowledge is not union. Therefore the further world of freedom awaits us there where we reach truth, not through feeling it by our senses or knowing it by our reason, but through the union of perfect sympathy.

Children with the freshness of their senses come directly to the intimacy of this world. This is the first great gift they have. They must accept it naked and simple and must never again lose their power of immediate communication with it. For our perfection we have to be vitally savage and mentally civilized; we should have the gift to be natural with nature and human with human society. My banished soul sitting in the civilized isolation of the town-life cried within me for the enlargement of the horizon of its comprehension. I was like the torn-away line of a verse, always in a state of suspense, while the other line, with which it rhymed and which could give it fulness, was smudged by the mist away in some undecipherable distance. The inexpensive power to be happy which, along with other children, I brought to this world, was being constantly worn away by friction with the brick-and-mortar arrangement of life, by monotonously mechanical habits and the customary code of respectability.

In the usual course of things I was sent to school, but possibly my suffering was unusually greater than that of most other children. The non-civilized in me was sensitive; it had the great thirst for colour, for music, for movement of life. Our city-built education took no heed of that living fact. It had its luggage-van waiting for branded bales of marketable result. The relative proportion of the non-civilized to the civilized in man should be in the proportion of the water and the land in our globe, the former predominating. But the school had for its object a continual reclamation of the civilized. Such a drain in the fluid element causes an aridity which may not be considered deplorable under city conditions. But my nature never got accustomed to those conditions, to the callous decency of the pavement. The non-civilized triumphed in me only

too soon and drove me away from school when I had just entered my teens. I found myself stranded on a solitary island of ignorance, and had to rely solely upon my own instincts to build up my education from the very beginning.

This reminds me that when I was young I had the great good fortune of coming upon a Bengali translation of *Robinson Crusoe.* I still believe that it is the best book for boys that has ever been written. There was a longing in me when young to run away from my own self and be one with everything in Nature. This mood appears to be particularly Indian, the outcome of a traditional desire for the expansion of consciousness. One has to admit that such a desire is too subjective in its character; but this is inevitable in the geographical circumstances which we have to endure. We live under the extortionate tyranny of the tropics, paying heavy toll every moment for the barest right of existence. The heat, the damp, the unspeakable fecundity of minute life feeding upon big life, the perpetual sources of irritation, visible and invisible, leave very little margin of capital for extravagant experiments. Excess of energy seeks obstacles for its self-realization. That is why we find so often in Western literature a constant emphasis upon the malignant aspect of Nature, in whom the people of the West seem to be delighted to discover an enemy for the sheer enjoyment of challenging her to fight. The reason which made Alexander express his desire to find other worlds to conquer, when his conquest of the world was completed, makes the enormously vital people of the West desire, when they have some respite in their sublime mission of fighting against objects that are noxious, to go out of their way to spread their coat-tails in other people's thoroughfares and to claim indemnity when these are trodden upon. In order to make the thrilling risk of hurting themselves they are ready to welcome endless trouble to hurt others who are inoffensive, such as the beautiful birds which happen to know how to fly away, the timid beasts, which have the advantage of inhabiting inaccessible regions, and—but I avoid the discourtesy of mentioning higher races in this connection.

Life's fulfilment finds constant contradictions in its path; but those are necessary for the sake of its advance. The stream is saved from the sluggishness of its current by the perpetual opposition of the soil through which it must cut its way. It is this soil which forms its banks. The spirit of fight belongs to the genius of life. The tuning of an instrument has to be done, not because it reveals a proficient perseverance in the face of difficulty, but because it helps music to be perfectly realized. Let us rejoice that in the West life's instrument is being tuned in all its different chords owing to the great fact that the West has triumphant pleasure in the struggle with obstacles. The spirit of creation in the heart of the universe will never allow, for its own sake, obstacles to be completely removed. It is only because positive truth lies in that ideal of perfection, which has to be won by our own endeavour in order to make it our own, that the spirit of fight is great. But this does not imply a premium for the exhibition of a muscular athleticism or a rude barbarism of ravenous rapacity.

In *Robinson Crusoe,* the delight of the union with Nature finds its expression in a story of adventure in which the solitary Man is face to face with solitary

Nature, coaxing her, co-operating with her, exploring her secrets, using all his faculties to win her help.

This is the heroic love-adventure of the West, the active wooing of the earth. I remember how, once in my youth, the feeling of intense delight and wonder followed me in my railway journey across Europe from Brindisi to Calais, when I realized the chaste beauty of this continent everywhere blossoming in a glow of health and richness under the age-long attention of her chivalrous lover, Western humanity. He had gained her, made her his own, unlocked the inexhaustible generosity of her heart. And I had intently wished that the introspective vision of the universal soul, which an Eastern devotee realizes in the solitude of his mind, could be united with this spirit of its outward expression in service, the exercise of will in unfolding the wealth of beauty and well-being from its shy obscurity to the light.

I remember the morning when a beggar woman in a Bengal village gathered in the loose end of her *sari* the stale flowers that were about too be thrown away from the vase on my table; and with an ecstatic expression of tenderness buried her face in them, exclaiming, 'Oh, Beloved of my Heart!' Her eyes could easily pierce the veil of the outward form and reach the realm of the infinite in these flowers, where she found the intimate touch of her Beloved, the great, the universal Human. But in spite of it all she lacked that energy of worship, that Western form of direct divine service, the service of man, which helps the earth to bring out her flowers and spread the reign of beauty on the desolate dust. I refuse to think that the twin spirits of the East and the West, the Mary and Martha, can never meet to make perfect the realization of truth And in spite of our material poverty in the East and the antagonism of time I wait patiently for this meeting.

Robinson Crusoe's island comes to my mind when I think of some institution where the first great lesson in the perfect union of Man and Nature, not only through love, but through active communication and intelligent ways, can be had unobstructed. We have to keep in mind the fact that love and action are the only intermediaries through which perfect knowledge can be obtained; for the object of knowledge is not pedantry but wisdom. The primary object of an institution should not be merely to educate one's limbs and mind to be in efficient readiness for all emergencies, but to be in perfect tune in the symphony of response between life and world, to find the balance of their harmony which is wisdom. The first important lesson for children in such a place would be that of improvization, the constant imposition of the ready-made having been banished from here. It is to give occasions to explore one's capacity through surprises of achievement. I must make it plain that this means a lesson not in simple life, but in creative life. For life may grow complex, and yet if there is a living personality in its centre, it will still have the unity of creation; it will carry its own weight in perfect grace, and will not be a mere addition to the number of facts that only goes to swell a crowd.

I wish I could say that I had fully realized my dream in my school. I have only made the first introduction towards it and have given an opportunity to

the children to find their freedom in Nature by being able to love it. For love is freedom; it gives us that fulness of existence which saves us from paying with our soul for objects that are immensely cheap. Love lights up this world with its meaning and makes life feel that it has that 'enough' everywhere which truly is its 'feast'. I know men who preach the cult of simple life by glorifying the spiritual merit of poverty. I refuse to imagine any special value in poverty when it is a mere negation. Only when the mind has the sensitiveness to be able to respond to the deeper call of reality is it naturally weaned away from the lure of the fictitious value of things. It is callousness which robs us of our simple power to enjoy, and dooms us to the indignity of a snobbish pride in furniture and the foolish burden of expensive things. But the callousness of asceticism pitted against the callousness of luxury is merely fighting one evil with the help of another, inviting the pitiless demon of the desert in place of the indiscriminate demon of the jungle.

I tried my best to develop in the children of my school the freshness of their feeling for Nature, a sensitiveness of soul in their relationship with their human surroundings, with the help of literature, festive ceremonials and also the religious teaching which enjoins us to come to the nearer presence of the world through the soul, thus to gain it more than can be measured—like gaining an instrument in truth by bringing out its music.

CHAPTER XIII

SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

THERE ARE INJURIES that attack our life; they hurt the harmony of life's functions through which is maintained the harmony of our physical self with the physical world; and these injuries are called diseases. There are also factors that oppress our intelligence. They injure the harmony of relationship between our rational mind and the universe of reason; and we call them stupidity, ignorance or insanity. They are uncontrolled exaggerations of passions that upset all balance in our personality. They obscure the harmony between the spirit of the individual man and the spirit of the universal Man; and we give them the name sin. In all these instances our realization of the universal Man, in his physical, rational and spiritual aspects, is obstructed, and our true freedom in the realms of matter, mind and spirit is made narrow or distorted.

All the higher religions of India speak of the training for *Mukti*, the liberation of the soul. In this self of ours we are conscious of individuality, and all its activities are engaged in the expression and enjoyment of our finite and individual nature. In our soul we are conscious of the transcendental truth in us, the Universal, the Supreme Man; and this soul, the spiritual self, has its enjoyment in the renunciation of the individual self for the sake of the supreme soul. This renunciation is not in the negation of self, but in the dedication of it. The desire for it comes from an instinct which very often knows its own meaning vaguely and gropes for a name that would define its purpose. This purpose is in the realization of its unity with some objective ideal of perfections, some harmony of relationship between the individual and the infinite man. It is of this harmony, and not of a barren isolation that the Upanishad speaks, when it says that truth no longer remains hidden in him who finds himself in the All.

Once when I was on a visit to a remote Bengali village, mostly inhabited by Mahomedan cultivators, the villagers entertained me with an operatic performance the literature of which belonged to an obsolete religious sect that had wide influence centuries ago. Though the religion itself is dead, its voice still continues preaching its philosophy to a people, who, in spite of their different culture, are not tired of listening. It discussed according to its own doctrine the different elements, material and transcendental, that constitute human personality, comprehending the body, the self and the soul. Then came a dialogue, during the course of which was related the incident of a person who wanted to make a journey to Brindaban, the Garden of Bliss, but was prevented by a watchman who startled him with an accusation of theft. The thieving was proved when it was shown that inside his clothes he was secretly trying to smuggle into the garden the self, which only finds its fulfilment by its surrender. The culprit was caught with the incriminating bundle in his possession which barred for him his passage to the supreme goal. Under a

tattered canopy, supported on bamboo poles and lighted by a few smoking kerosene lamps, the village crowd, occasionally interrupted by howls of jackals in the neighbouring paddy fields, attended with untired interest, till the small hours of the morning, the performance of a drama that discussed the ultimate meaning of all things in a seemingly incongruous setting of dance, music and humorous dialogue.

This illustration will show how naturally, in India, poetry and philosophy have walked hand in hand, only because the latter has claimed its right to guide men to the practical path of their life's fulfilment. What is that fulfilment? It is our freedom in truth, which has for its prayer:

> Lead us from the unreal to reality.
> For *satyam* is *anandam*, the Real is Joy.

In the world of art, our consciousness being freed from the tangle of self interest, we gain an unobstructed vision of unity, the incarnation of the real, which is a joy for ever.

As in the world of art, so in the spiritual world, our soul waits for its freedom from the ego to reach that disinterested joy which is the source and goal of creation. It cries for its *mukti*, its freedom in the unity of truth. The idea of *mukti* has affected our lives in India, touched the springs of pure emotions and supplications; for it soars heavenward on the wings of poesy. We constantly hear men of scanty learning and simple faith singing in their prayer to Tara, the Goddess Redeemer:

'For what sin should I be compelled to remain in this dungeon of the world of appearance?'

They are afraid of being alienated from the world of truth, afraid of perpetual drifting amidst the froth and foam of things, of being tossed about by the tidal waves of pleasure and pain and never reaching the ultimate meaning of life. Of these men, one may be a carter driving his cart to market, another a fisherman playing his net. They may not be prompt with an intelligent answer if they are questioned about the deeper import of the song they sing, but they have no doubt in their mind, that the abiding cause of all misery is not so much in the lack of life's furniture as in the obscurity of life's significance. It is a common topic with such to decry an undue emphasis upon 'me' and 'mine', which falsifies the perspective of truth. For have they not often seen men, who are not above their own level in social position or intellectual acquirement, going out to seek Truth, leaving everything that they have behind them?

They know that the object of these adventurers is not betterment in worldly wealth and power—it is *mukti*, freedom. They possibly know some poor fellow villager of their own craft, who remains in the world carrying on his daily vocation and yet has the reputation of being emancipated in the heart of the Eternal. I myself have come across a fisherman singing with an inward absorption of mind, while fishing all day in the Ganges, who was pointed out to me by my boatman, with awe, as a man of liberated spirit. He is out of reach of the conventional prices that are set upon men by society, and which classify

them like toys arranged in the shop-windows according to the market standard of value.

When the figure of this fisherman comes to my mind, I cannot but think that their number is not small who with their lives sing the epic of the unfettered soul, but will never be known in history. These unsophisticated Indian peasants know that an Emperor is merely a decorated slave, remaining chained to his Empire, that a millionaire is kept pilloried by his fate in the golden cage of his wealth, while this fisherman is free in the realm of light. When, groping in the dark, we stumble against objects, we cling to them believing them to be our only hope. When light comes, we slacken our hold, finding them to be mere parts of the All to which we are related. The simple man of the village knows what freedom is—freedom from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things, which imparts a fierce intensity to our sense of possession. He knows that this freedom is not the mere negation of bondage, in the bareness of our belongings, but in some positive realization which gives pure joy to our being, and he sings: 'To him who sinks into the deep, nothing remains unattained.' He says again:

> Let my two minds meet and combine,
> And lead me to the city Wonderful.

When that one mind of ours which wanders in search of things in the outer region of the varied, and the other which seeks the inward vision of unity, are no longer in conflict, they help us to realize the *ajab*, the *anirvachaniya*, the ineffable. The poet saint Kabir has also the same message when he sings:

> By saying that Supreme Reality only dwells in the inner realm of spirit, we shame the outer world of matter; and also when we say that he is only in the outside, we do not speak the truth.

According to these singers, truth is in unity, and therefore freedom is in its realization. The texts of our daily worship and meditation are for training our mind to overcome the barrier of separateness from the rest of existence and to realize *advaitam*, the Supreme Unity which is *anantam*, infinitude. It is philosophical wisdom, having its universal radiation in the popular mind in India, that inspires our prayer, our daily spiritual practices. It has its constant urging for us to go beyond the world of appearances, in which facts as facts are alien to us, like the mere sounds of foreign music; it speaks to us of an emancipation in the inner truth of all things, where the endless *Many* reveal the *One*.

Freedom in the material world has also the same meaning expressed in its own language. When nature's phenomena appeared to us as irrelevant, as heterogeneous manifestations of an obscure and irrational caprice, we lived in an alien world never dreaming of our *swaraj* within its territory. Through the discovery of the harmony of its working with that of our reason, we realize our unity with it, and therefore our freedom.

Those who have been brought up in a misunderstanding of this world's process, not knowing that it is one with themselves through the relationship

of knowledge and intelligence, are trained as cowards by a hopeless faith in the ordinance of a destiny darkly dealing its blows. They submit without struggle when human rights are denied them, being accustomed to imagine themselves born as outlaws in a world constantly thrusting upon them incomprehensible surprises of accidents.

Also in the social or political field, the lack of freedom is based upon the spirit of alienation, on the imperfect realization of the One. There our bondage is in the tortured link of union. One may imagine that an individual who succeeds in dissociating himself from his fellow attains real freedom, inasmuch as all ties of relationship imply obligation to others. But we know that, though it may sound paradoxical, it is true that in the human world only a perfect arrangement of interdependence gives rise to freedom. The most individualistic of human beings who own no responsibility are the savages who fail to attain their fulness of manifestation. They live immersed in obscurity, like an ill-lighted fire that cannot liberate itself from its envelope of smoke. Only those may attain their freedom from the segregation of an eclipsed life who have the power to cultivate mutual understanding and co-operation. The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship.

It has become possible for men to say that existence is evil, only because in our blindness we have missed something wherein our existence has its truth. If a bird tries to soar with only one of its wings, it is offended with the wind for buffeting it down to the dust. All broken truths are evil. They hurt because they suggest something they do not offer. Death does not hurt us, but disease does, because disease constantly reminds us of health and yet withholds it from us. And life in a halfworld is evil because it feigns finality when it is obviously incomplete, giving us the cup but not the draught of life. All tragedies result from truth remaining a fragment, its cycle not being completed. That cycle finds its end when the individual realize the universal and thus reaches freedom.

But because this freedom is in truth itself and not in an appearance of it, no hurried path of success, forcibly cut out by the greed of result, can be a true path. And an obscure village poet, unknown to the world of recognized respectability, sings:

> O cruel man of urgent need, must you scorch with fire the mind which still is a bud? You will burst it into bits, destroy its perfume in your impatience. Do you not see that my Lord, the Supreme Teacher, takes ages to perfect the flower and never is in a fury of haste? But because of your terrible greed, you only rely on force, and what hope is there for you, O man of urgent need? 'Prithi', says Madan the poet, 'Hurt not the mind of my Teacher. Know that only he who follows the simple current and loses himself, can hear the voice, O man of urgent need.'

This poet knows that there is no external means of taking freedom by the

throat. It is the inward process of losing ourselves that leads to it. Bondage in all its forms has its stronghold in the inner self and not in the outside world; it is in the dimming of our consciousness, in the narrowing of our perspective, in the wrong valuation of things.

Let me conclude this chapter with a song of the Baül sect in Bengal, over a century old, in which the poet sings of the eternal bond of union between the infinite and the finite soul, from which there can be no *mukti*, because love is ultimate, because it is an inter-relation which makes truth complete, because absolute independence is the blankness of utter servility. The song runs thus:

> It goes on blossoming for ages, the soul-lotus, in which I am bound, as well as thou, without escape. There is no end to the opening of its petals, and the honey in it has so much sweetness that thou, like an enchanted bee, canst never desert it, and therefore thou art bound, and I am, and *mukti* is nowhere.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE

I HAVE EXPRESSLY said that I have concentrated my attention upon the subject of religion which is solely related to man, helping him to train his attitude and behaviour towards the infinite in its human aspect. At the same time it should be understood that the tendency of the Indian mind has ever been towards that transcendentalism which does not hold religion to be ultimate but rather to be a means to a further end. This end consists in the perfect liberation of the individual in the universal spirit across the furthest limits of humanity itself.

Such an extreme form of mysticism may be explained to my Western readers by its analogy in science. For science my truly be described as mysticism in the realm of material knowledge. It helps us to go beyond appearances and reach the inner reality of things in principles which are abstractions; it emancipates our mind from the thraldom of the senses to the freedom of reason.

The commonsense view of the world that is apparent to us has its vital importance for ourselves. For all our practical purposes the earth *is* flat, the sun *does* set behind the western horizon and whatever may be the verdict of the great mathematician about the lack of consistency in time's dealings we should fully trust it in setting our watches right. In questions relating to the arts and our ordinary daily avocations we must treat material objects as they seem to be and not as they are in essence. But the revelations, of science even when they go far beyond man's power of direct perception give him the purest feeling of disinterested delight and a supersensual background to his world. Science offers us the mystic knowledge of matter which very often passes the range of our imagination. We humbly accept it following those teachers who have trained their reason to free itself from the trammels of appearance or personal preferences. Their mind dwells in an impersonal infinity where there is no distinction between good and bad, high and low, ugly and beautiful, useful and useless, where all things have their one common right of recognition, that of their existence.

The final freedom of spirit which India aspires after has a similar character of realization. It is beyond all limits of personality, divested of all moral, or aesthetic distinctions; it is the pure consciousness of Being, the ultimate reality which has an infinite illumination of bliss. Though science brings our thoughts to utmost limit of mind's territory it cannot transcend its own creation made of a harmony of logical symbols. In it the chick has come out of its shell but not out of the definition of its own chickenhood. But in India it has been said by the *yogi* that through an intensive process of concentration and quietude our consciousness *does* reach that infinity where knowledge ceases to be knowledge, subject and object become one, a state of existence that cannot be defined.

We have our personal self. It has its desires which struggle to create a world where they could have their unrestricted activity and satisfaction. While it goes on we discover that our self-realization reaches its perfection in the abnegation of self. This fact has made us aware that the individual finds his meaning in a fundamental reality comprehending all individuals—the reality which is the moral and spiritual basis of the realm of human values. This belongs to our religion. As science is the liberation of our knowledge in the universal reason which cannot be other than human reason, religion is the liberation of our individual personality in the universal Person who is human all the same.

The ancient explorers in psychology in India who declare that our emancipation can be carried still further into a realm where infinity is not bounded by human limitations, are not content with advancing this as a doctrine; they advocate its pursuit for the attainment of the highest goal of man. And for its sake the path of discipline has been planned which should be opened out across our life through all its stages helping us to develop our humanity to perfection so that we may surpass it in a finality of freedom.

Perfection has its two aspects in man which can to some extent be separated, the perfection in being, and perfection in doing. It can be imagined that through some training or compulsion good works may possibly be extorted from a man who personally may not be good. Activities that have fatal risks are often undertaken by cowards even though they are conscious of the danger. Such works may be useful and may continue to exist beyond the lifetime of the individual who produced them. And yet where the question is not that of utility but of moral perfection we hold it important that the individual should be true in his goodness. His outer good work may continue to produce good results but the inner perfection of his personality has its own immense value which for him is spiritual freedom and for humanity is an endless asset though we may not know it. For goodness represents the detachment of our spirit from the exclusiveness of our egoism; in goodness we identify ourselves with the universal humanity. Its value is not merely in some benefit for our fellow beings but in its truth itself through which we realize within us that man is not merely an animal bound by his individual passions and appetites but a spirit that has its unfettered perfection. Goodness is the freedom of our self in the world of man, as is love. We have to be true within. not for worldly duties but for that spiritual fulfilment, which is harmony with the Perfect, in union with the Eternal. If this were not true, then mechanical perfection would be considered to be of higher value than the spiritual. In order to realize his unity with the universal, the individual man must live his perfect life which alone gives him the freedom to transcend it.

Doubtless Nature, for its own biological purposes, has created in us a strong faith in life, by keeping us unmindful of death. Nevertheless, not only our physical existence, but also the environment which it builds up around itself, may desert us in the moment of triumph, the greatest prosperity comes to its end. dissolving into emptiness; the mightiest empire is overtaken by

stupor amidst the flicker of its festival lights. All this is none the less true because its truism bores us to be reminded of it.

And yet it is equally true that, though all our mortal relationships have their end, we cannot ignore them with impunity while they last. If we behave as if they do not exist, merely because they will not continue forever, they will all the same exact their dues, with a great deal over by way of penalty. Trying to ignore bonds that are real, albeit temporary, only strengthens and prolongs their bondage. The soul is great, but the self has to be crossed over in order to reach it. We do not attain our goal by destroying our path.

Our teachers in ancient India realized the soul of man as something very great indeed. They saw no end to its dignity, which found its consummation in Brahma himself. Any limited view of man would therefore be an incomplete view. He could not reach his finality as a mere citizen or Patriot, for neither City nor Country nor the bubble called the World, could contain his eternal soul.

Bhartrihari, who was once a king, has said:

> What if you have secured the fountain-head of all desires; what if you have put your foot on the neck of your enemy, or by your good fortune gathered friends around you? What, even, if you have succeeded in keeping mortal bodies alive for ages—*tatah kim*, what then?

That is to say, man is greater than all these objects of his desire. He is true in his freedom.

But in the process of attaining freedom one must bind his will in order to save its forces from distraction and wastage, so as to gain for it the velocity which comes from the bondage itself. Those also, who seek liberty in a purely political plane, constantly curtail it and reduce their freedom of thought and action to that narrow limit which is necessary for making political power secure, very often at the cost of liberty of consciousness.

India had originally accepted the bonds of her social system in order to transcend society, as the rider puts reins on his horse and stirrups on his own feet in order to ensure greater speed towards his goal.

The Universe cannot be so madly conceived that desire should be an interminable song with no finale. And just as it is painful to stop in the middle of the tune, it should be as pleasant to reach its final cadence.

India has not advised us to come to a sudden stop while work is in full swing. It is true that the unending procession of the world has gone on, through its ups and downs, from the beginning of creation till to-day; but it is equally obvious that each individual's connection therewith *does* get finished. Must he necessarily quit it without any sense of fulfilment?

So, in the divisions of man's world-life which we had in India, work came in the middle, and freedom at the end. As the day is divided into morning, noon, afternoon and evening, so India had divided man's life into four parts, following the requirements of his nature. The day has the waxing and waning of its light; so has man the waxing and waning of his bodily powers. Acknowledging this, India gave a connected meaning to his life from start to finish.

First came *brahmacharya*, the period of discipline in education; then *grahasthya*, that of the world's work; then *vanaprasthya*, the retreat for the loosening of bonds; and finally *pravrajya*, the expectant awaiting of freedom across death.

We have come to look upon life as a conflict with death,—the intruding enemy, not the natural ending,—in impotent quarrel with which we spend every stage of it. When the time comes for youth to depart, we would hold it back by main force. When the fervour of desire slackens, we would revive it with fresh fuel of our own devising. When our sense organs weaken, we urge them to keep up their efforts. Even when our grip has relaxed we are reluctant to give up possession. We are not trained to recognize the inevitable as natural, and so cannot give up gracefully that which has to go, but needs must wait till it is snatched from us. The truth comes as conqueror only because we have lost the art of receiving it as guest.

The stem of the ripening fruit becomes loose, its pulp soft, but its seed hardens with provision for the next life. Our outward losses, due to age, have likewise corresponding inward gains. But, in man's inner life, his will plays a dominant part, so that these gains depend on his own disciplined striving; that is why, in the case of undisciplined man, who has omitted to secure such provision for the next stage, it is so often seen that his hair is grey, his mouth toothless, his muscles slack, and yet his stem-hold on life has refused to let go its grip, so much so that he is anxious to exercise his will in regard to worldly details even after death.

But renounce we must, and through renunciation gain,—that is the truth of the inner world.

The flower must shed its petals for the sake of fruition, the fruit must drop off for the re-birth of the tree. The child leaves the refuge of the womb in order to achieve the further growth of body and mind in which consists the whole of the child life; next, the soul has to come out of this self-contained stage into the fuller life, which has varied relations with kinsman and neighbour, together with whom it forms a larger body; lastly comes the decline of the body, the weakening of desire, and, enriched with its experiences, the soul now leaves the narrower life for the universal life, to which it dedicates its accumulated wisdom and itself enters into relationship with the Life Eternal; so that, when finally the decaying body has come to the very end of its tether, the soul views its breaking away quite simply and without regret, in the expectation of its own entry into the Infinite.

From individual body to community, from community to universe, from universe to Infinity,—this is the soul's normal progress.

Our teachers, therefore, keeping in mind goal of this progress, did not, in life's first stage of education, prescribe merely the learning of books of things, but *brahmacharya*, the living in discipline, whereby both enjoyment and its renunciation would come with equal ease to the strengthened character. Life being a pilgrimage, with liberation in Brahma as its object, the living of it was as a spiritual exercise to be carried through its different stages, reverently

and with a vigilant determination. And the pupil, from his very initiation, had this final consummation always kept in his view.

Once the mind refuses to be bound by temperate requirements, there ceases to be any reason why it should cry halt at any particular limit; and so, like trying to extinguish fire with oil, its acquisitions only make its desires blaze up all the fiercer. That is why it is so essential to habituate the mind, from the very beginning, to be conscious of, and desirous of, keeping within the natural limits; to cultivate the spirit of enjoyment which is allied with the spirit of freedom, the readiness for renunciation.

After the period of such training comes the period of world-life,—the life of the householder. Manu tells us:

> It is not possible to discipline ourselves so effectively if out of touch with the world, as while pursuing the world-life with wisdom.

That is to say, wisdom does not attain completeness except through the living of life; and discipline divorced from wisdom is not true discipline, but merely the meaningless following of custom, which is only a disguise for stupidity.

Work, especially good work, becomes easy only when desire has learnt to discipline itself. Then alone does the householder's state become a centre of welfare for all the world, and instead of being an obstacle, helps on the final liberation.

The second stage of life having been thus spent, the decline of the bodily powers must be taken as a warning that it is coming to its natural end. This must not be taken dismally as a notice of dismissal to one still eager to stick to his post, but joyfully as maturity may be accepted as the stage of fulfilment.

After the infant leaves the womb, it still has to remain close to its mother for a time, remaining attached in spite of its detachment, until it can adapt itself to its new freedom. Such is the case in the third stage of life, when man though aloof from the world still remains in touch with it while preparing himself for the final stage of complete freedom. He still gives to the world from his store of wisdom and accepts its support; but this inter-change is not of the same intimate character as in the stage of the householder, there being a new sense of distance.

Then at last comes a day when even such free relations have their end, and the emancipated soul steps out of all bonds to face the Supreme Soul.

Only in this way can man's world-life be truly lived from one end to the other, without being engaged at every step in trying conclusions with death, not being overcome, when death comes in due course, as by a conquering enemy.

For this fourfold way of life India attunes man to the grand harmony of the universal, leaving no room for untrained desires of a rampant individualism to pursue their destructive career unchecked, but leading them on to their ultimate modulation in the Supreme.

If we really believe this, then we must uphold an ideal of life in which

everything else,—the display of individual power, the might of nations,—must be counted as subordinate and the soul of man must triumph and liberate itself from the bond of personality which keeps it in an ever revolving circle of limitation.

If that is not to be, *tatah kim*, what then?

But such an ideal of the utter extinction of the individual separateness has not a universal sanction in India. There are many of us whose prayer is for dualism so that for them the bond of devotion with God may continue forever. For them religion is a truth which is ultimate and they refuse to envy those who are ready to sail for the further shore of existence across humanity. They know that human imperfection is the cause of our sorrow but there is a fulfilment in love within the range of our limitation which accepts all sufferings and yet rises above them.

CHAPTER XV

CONCLUSION

IN THE SANSKRIT Language the bird is described as 'twice-born'—once in its limited shell and then finally in the freedom of the unbounded sky. Those of our community who believe in the liberation of man's limited self in the freedom of the spirit retain the same epithet for themselves. In all departments of life man shows this dualism—his existence within the range of obvious facts and his transcendence of it in a realm of deeper meaning.

Having this instinct inherent in his mind which ever suggests to him the crossing of the border, he has never accepted what is apparent as final and his incessant struggle has been to break through the shell of his limitations. In this attempt he often goes against the instincts of his vital nature, and even exults in his defiance of the extreme penal laws of the biological kingdom. The best wealth of his civilization has been achieved by his following the guidance of this instinct in his ceaseless adventure of the Endless Further. His achievement of truth goes far beyond his needs and the realization of his self strives across the frontier of its individual interest. This proves to him his infinity and makes his religion real to him by his own manifestation in truth and goodness. Only for man there can be religion because his evolution is from efficiency in nature towards the perfection of spirit.

According to some interpretations of the Vedanta doctrine Brahman is the absolute Truth, the impersonal It, in which there can be no distinction of this and that, the good and the evil, the beautiful and its opposite, having no other quality except its ineffable blissfulness in the eternal solitude of its consciousness utterly devoid of all things and all thoughts. But, as our religion can only have its significance in this phenomenal world comprehended by our human self, this absolute conception of Brahman is outside the subject of my discussion. What I have tried to bring out in this book is the fact that whatever name may have been given to the divine Reality it has found its highest place in the history of our religion owing to its human character, giving meaning to the idea of sin and sanctity, and offering an eternal background to all the ideals of perfection which have their harmony with man's own nature.

We have the age-long tradition in our country, as I have already stated, that through the process of *yoga* man can transcend the utmost bounds of his humanity and find himself in a pure state of consciousness of his undivided unity with Parabrahman. There is none who has the right to contradict this belief; for it is a matter of direct experience and not of logic. It is widely known in India that there are individuals who have the power to attain temporarily the state of *Samadhi*, the complete merging of the self in the infinite, a state which is indescribable. While accepting their testimony as true, let us at the same time have faith in the testimony of others who have felt a profound love, which is the intense feeling of union, for a Being who comprehends in himself all things that are human in knowledge, will and action. And he is God, who is not merely a sum total of facts, but the goal that lies immensely beyond all that is comprised in the past and the present.

APPENDIX I

THE BAŬL SINGERS OF BENGAL

[*The following account of the Baüls in Northern India has been given in the Visvabharati Quarterly by my friend and fellow-worker, Professor Kshiti Mohun Sen of Santiniketan, to whom I am grateful for having kindly allowed me to reproduce what he has written in this Appendix.—Editor*]

BAŬL MEANS MADCAP, from *bayu* (Skt. *Vayu*) in its sense of nerve current, and has become the appellation of a set of people who do not conform to established social usage. This derivation is supported by the following verse of Narahari:

> That is why, brother, I became a madcap Baül.
> No master I obey, nor injunctions, canons or custom.
> Now no men-made distinctions have any hold on me,
> And I revel only in the gladness of my own welling love.
> In love there's no separation, but commingling always.
> So I rejoice in song and dance with each and all.

These lines also introduce us to the main tenets of the cult. The freedom, however, that the Baüls seek from all forms of outward compulsion goes even further, for among such are recognized as well the compulsions exerted by our desires and antipathies. Therefore, according to this cult, in order to gain real freedom, one has first to die to the life of the world whilst still in the flesh—for only then can one be rid of all extraneous claims. Those of the Baüls who have Islamic leanings call such 'death in life' *fana*, a term used by the Sufis to denote union with the Supreme Being. True love, according to the Baüls, is incompatible with any kind of compulsion. Unless the bonds of necessity are overcome, liberation is out of the question. Love represents the wealth of life which is in excess of need.... From hard, practical politics touching our earth to the nebulous regions of abstract metaphysics, everywhere India expressed the power of her genius equally well. . . . And yet none of these, neither severally nor collectively, constituted her specific genius; none showed the full height to which she could raise herself, none compassed the veritable amplitude of her inner-most reality. It is when we come to the domain of the Spirit, of God-realization, that we find the real nature and stature and genius of the Indian people; it is here that India lives and moves as in her own home of Truth.

The Baül cult is followed by householders as well as homeless wanderers, neither of whom acknowledge class or caste, special deities, temples or sacred places. Though they congregate on the occasion of religious festivals, mainly of the Vaishnavas, held in special centres, they never enter any temple. They do not set up any images of divinities, or religious symbols, in their own places of worship of mystic realization. True, they sometimes maintain with care and reverence spots sacred to some esteemed master or devotee, but they perform

no worship there. Devotees from the lowest strata of the Hindu and Moslem communities are welcomed into their ranks, hence the Baūls are looked down upon by both. It is possible that their own contempt for temples had its origin in the denial of admittance therein to their low class brethren. What need, say they, have we of other temples, is not this body of ours the temple where the Supreme Spirit has His abode? The human body, despised by most other religions, is thus for them the holy of holies, wherein the Divine is intimately enshrined as the Man of the Heart. And in this wise is the dignity of Man upheld by them.

Kabir, Nanak, Ravidas, Dadu and his followers have also called man's body the temple of God—the microcosm in which the cosmic abode of the all-pervading Supreme Being is represented.

Kabir says:

> In this body is the Garden of Paradise; herein are comprised the seven seas and the myriad stars; here is the Creator manifest. (I. 101.)

Dadu says:

> This body is my scripture; herein the All-Merciful has written for me His message.

Rajjab (Dadu's chief Moslem disciple) says:

> Within the devotee is the paper on which the scriptures are written in letters of Life. But few care to read them; they turn a deaf ear to the message of the heart.

Most Indian sects adopt some distinct way of keeping the hair of head and face as a sign of their sect or order. Therefore, so as to avoid being dragged into any such distinctions, the Baūls allow hair and beard and moustache to grow freely. Thus do we remain simple, they say. The similar practice of the Sikhs in this matter is to be noted. Neither do the Baūls believe that lack of clothing or bareness of body conduce to religious merit. According to them the whole body should be kept decently covered. Hence their long robe, for which, if they cannot afford a new piece of cloth, they gather rags and make it of patches. In this they are different from the ascetic *sanyasins*, but resemble rather the Buddhist monks.

The Baūls do not believe in aloofness from, or renunciation of, any person or thing; their central idea is *yoga*, attachment to and communion with the divine and its manifestations, as the means of realization. We fail to recognize the temple of God in the bodily life of man, they explain, because its lamp is not alight. The true vision must be attained in which this temple will become manifest in each and every human body, whereupon mutual communion and worship will spontaneously arise. Truth cannot be communicated to those on whom you look down. You must be able to see the divine light that shines within them, for it is your own lack of vision that makes all seem dark.

Kabir says the same thing:

In every abode the light doth shine; it is you who are blind that cannot see. When by dint of looking and looking you at length can discern it, the veils of this world will be torn asunder. (II. 33.)

It is because the devotee is not in communion that he says the goal is far away. (II. 34).

Many such similarities are to be observed between the sayings of the Baüls and those of the Upper Indian devotees of the Middle Ages, but, unlike the case of the followers of the latter, the Baüls did not become crystallized into any particular order or religious organization. So, in the Baüls of Bengal, there is to be found a freedom and independence of mind and spirit that resists all attempt at definition. Their songs are unique in courage and felicity of expression. But under modern conditions they are becoming extinct, or at best holding on to external features bereft of their original speciality. It would be a great pity if no record of their achievements should be kept before their culture is lost to the world.

Though the Baüls count amongst their following a variety of sects and castes, both Hindu and Moslem, chiefly coming from the lower social ranks, they refuse to give any other account of themselves to the questioner than that they are Baüls. They acknowledge none of the social or religious formalities, but delight in the ever-changing play of life, which cannot be expressed in mere words but of which something may be captured in song, through the ineffable medium of rhythm and tune.

Their songs are passed on from Master to disciple, the latter when competent adding others of his own, but, as already mentioned, they are never recorded in book form. Their replies to questions are usually given by singing appropriate selections from these songs. If asked the reason why, they say: 'We are like birds. We do not walk on our legs, but fly with our wings.'

There was a Brahmin of Bikrampur, known as Chhaku Thakur, who was the disciple of a Baül of the Namasudra caste (accounted one of the lowest) and hence had lost his place in his own community. When admonished to be careful about what he uttered, so as to avoid popular odium, he answered with the song:

Let them relieve their minds by saying what they will,
I pursue my own simple way, fearing none at all.
The Mango seed will continue to produce Mango trees, no Jambolans.
This seed of mine will produce the real *me*—all glory to my Master!

Love being the main principle according to the Baüls, a Vaishnava once asked a Baül devotee whether he was aware of the different kinds of love as classified in the Vaishnava scriptures. 'What should an illiterate ignoramus like me know of the scriptures?' was the reply. The Vaishnava then offered to read and explain the text, which he proceeded to do, while the Baül listened with such patience as he could muster. When asked for his opinion, after the reading was over, he sang:

A goldsmith, methinks, has come into the flower garden.
He would appraise the lotus, forsooth,
By rubbing it on his touchstone!

Recruits from the higher castes are rare amongst the Baūls. When any such do happen to come, they are reduced to the level of the rest. Are the lower planks of a boat of any lesser importance than the upper? say they.

Once in Vikrampur, I was seated on the river bank by the side of a Baūl. 'Father', I asked him, 'why is it that you keep no historical record of yourselves for the use of posterity?' 'We follow the *sahaj* (simple) way', he replied, 'and so leave no trace behind us.' The tide had then ebbed, and there was but little water in the river bed. Only a few boatmen were to be seen pushing their boats along the mud. The Baūl continued: 'Do the boats that sail over the flooded river leave any mark? What should these boatmen of the muddy track, urged on by their need, know of the *sahaj* (simple) way? The true endeavour is to keep oneself simply afloat in the stream of devotion that flows through the lives of devotees—to mingle one's own devotion with theirs. There are many classes of men amongst the Baūls, but they are all Baūls—they have no other achievement or history. All the streams that fall into the Ganges become the Ganges. So must we lose ourselves in the common stream, else will it cease to be living.'

On another Baūl being asked why they did not follow the scriptures, 'Are we dogs', he replied, 'that we should lick up the leavings of others? Brave men rejoice in the output of their own energy, they create their own festivals. These cowards who have not the power to rejoice in themselves have to rely on what others have left. Afraid lest the world should lack festivals in the future, they save up the scraps left over by their predecessors for later use. They are content with glorifying their forefathers because they know not how to create for themselves.'

If you would know that Man,
Simple must be your endeavour.
To the region of the simple must you fare.
Pursuers of the path of man's own handiwork,
Who follow the crowd, gleaning their false leavings,
What news can they get of the Real?

It is hardly to be wondered at that people who think thus should have no use for history!

We have already noticed that, like all the followers of the simple way, the Baūls have no faith in specially sacred spots or places of pilgrimage, but that they nevertheless congregate on the occasion of religious festivals. If asked why, the Baūl says:

We would be within hail of the other Boatmen, to hear their calls,
That we may make sure our boat rightly floats on the *sahaj* stream.

Not what men have said or done in the past, but the living human touch is what they find helpful. Here is a song giving their ideas about pilgrimage:

I would not go, my heart, to Mecca or Medina,
For behold, I ever abide by the side of my Friend.
Mad would I become, had I dwelt afar, not knowing Him.
There's no worship in Mosque or Temple or special holy day.
At every step I have my Mecca and Kashi; sacred is every moment.

If a Baül is asked the age of his cult—whether it comes before or after this one or that, he says, 'Only the artificial religions of the world are limited by time. Our *sahaj* (simple, natural) religion is timeless, it has neither beginning nor end, it is of all time.' The religion of the Upanishads and Puranas, even that of the Vedas, is, according to them, artificial.

The followers of the *sahaj* cult believe only in living religious experience. Truth, according to them, has two aspects, inert and living. Confined to itself truth has no value for man. It becomes priceless when embodied in a living personality. The conversion of the inert into living truth by the devotee they compare to the conversion into milk by the cow of its fodder, or the conversion by the tree of dead matter into fruit. He who has this power of making truth living, is the Guru or Master. Such Gurus they hold in special reverence, for the eternal and all-pervading truth can only be brought to man's door by passing through his life.

The Baüls say that emptiness of time and space is required for a playground. That is why God has preserved an emptiness in the heart of man, for the sake of His own play of Love. Our wise and learned ones were content with finding in Brahma the *tat* (lit. 'that'—the ultimate substance). The Baüls, not being Pandits, do not profess to understand all this fuss about *thatness*, they want a Person. So their God is the Man of the Heart (*maner manush*) sometimes simply the Man (*purush*). This Man of the Heart is ever and anon lost in the turmoil of things. Whilst He is revealed within, no worldly pleasures can give satisfaction. Their sole anxiety is the finding of this Man.

The Baül sings:

Ah, where am I to find Him, the Man of my Heart?
Alas, since I lost Him, I wander in search of Him,
Thro' lands near and far.

The agony of separation from Him cannot be mitigated for them by learning or philosophy:

Oh, these words and words, my mind would none of them,
The Supreme Man it must and shall discover.
So long as Him I do not see, these mists slake not my thirst.
Mad am I; for lack of that Man I madly run about;
For his sake the world I've felt; for Bisha naught else will serve.

This Bisha was a *bhuin-mali*, by caste, disciple of Bala, the Kaivarta.

This cult of the Supreme Man is only to be found in the Vedas hidden away in the Purushasukta (A.V. 19.6). It is more freely expressed by the Upper Indian devotees of the Middle Ages. It is all in all with the Baüls. The God

whom these illiterate outcastes seek so simply and naturally in their lives is obscured by the accredited religious leaders in philosophical systems and terminology, in priestcraft and ceremonial, in institutions and temples.

Not satisfied with the *avatars* (incarnations of God) mentioned in the scriptures, the Baũl sings:

> As we look on every creature, we find each to be His *avatar*. What can you teach us of His ways? In ever-new play He wondrously revels.

And Kabir also tells us:

> All see the Eternal One, but only the devotee, in his solitude, recognizes him.

A friend of mine was once much impressed by the reply of a Baũl who was asked why his robe was not tinted with ascetic ochre:

> Can the colour show outside, unless the inside is first tinctured? Can the fruit attain ripe sweetness by the painting of its skin?

This aversion of the Baũl from outward marks of distinction is also shared by the Upper Indian devotees, as I have elsewhere noticed.

The age-long controversy regarding *dvaita* (dualism) and *advaita* (monism) is readily solved by these wayfarers on the path of Love. Love is the simple striving, love the natural communion, so believe the Baũls. 'Ever two and ever one, of this the name of Love', say they. In love, oneness is achieved without any loss of respective self-hood.

The same need exists for the reconcilement of the antagonism between the outer call of the material world and the inner call of the spiritual world, as for the realization of the mutual love of the individual and Supreme Self. The God who is Love, say the Baũls, can alone serve to turn the currents of the within and the without in one and the same direction.

Kabir says:

> If we say He is only within then the whole Universe is shamed.
> If we say He is only without, then that is false.
> He, whose feet rest alike on the sentient and on the inert,
> fills the gap between the inner and the outer world.

The inter-relations of man's body and the Universe have to be realized by spiritual endeavour. Such endeavour is called *Kaya Sadhan* (Realization through the body).

One process in this *Kaya Sadhan* of the Baũls is known as *Urdha-srota* (the elevation of the current). Waters flow downwards according to the ordinary physical law. But with the advent of Life the process is reversed. When the living seed sprouts the juices are drawn upwards, and on the elevation that such flow can attain depends the height of the tree. It is the same in the life of man. His desires ordinarily flow downward towards animality. The endeavour of the expanding spirit is to turn their current upwards towards the light. The currents of *jiva* (animal life) must be converted into the current of *Shiva*

(God life). They form a centre round the ego; they must be raised by the force of love.

Says Dadu's daughter, Nanimata:

My life is the lamp afloat on the stream.
To what bourne shall it take me?
How is the divine to conquer the carnal,
The downward current to be upward turned?
As when the wick is lighted the oil doth upward flow,
So simply is destroyed the thirst of the body.

The *Yoga* Vasistha tells us:

Uncleansed desires bind to the world, purified desires give liberation.

References to this reversal of current are also to be found in the Atharva Veda (X. 2.9; 2.34). This reversal is otherwise considered by Indian devotees as the conversion of the *sthula* (gross) in the sukshma (fine).

The Baũl sings:

Love is my golden touch—it turns desire into service:
Earth seeks to become Heaven, man to become God.

Another aspect of the idea of reversal has been put thus by Rabindranath Tagore in his *Broken Ties:*

> If I keep going in the same direction along which He comes to me, then I shall be going further and further away from Him. If I proceed in the opposite direction, then only can we meet. He loves form, so He is continually descending towards form. We cannot live by form alone, so we must ascend towards His formlessness. He is free, so His play is within bonds. We are bound, so we find our joy in freedom. All our sorrow is because we cannot understand this. He who sings, proceeds from his joy to the tune; he who hears, from the tune to joy. One comes from freedom into bondage, the other goes from bondage into freedom; only thus can they have their communion. He sings and we hear. He ties the bonds as He sings to us, we untie them as we listen to Him.

This idea also occurs in our devotees of the Middle Ages.

The '*sahaj*' folk endeavour to seek the bliss of divine union only for its own sake. Mundane desires are therefore accounted the chief obstacles in the way. But for getting rid of them, the wise Guru, according to the Baũls, does not advise renunciation of the good things of the world, but the opening of the door to the higher self. Thus guided, says Kabir,

I close not my eyes, stop not my ears, nor torment my body.
But every path I then traverse becomes a path of pilgrimage, whatever work I engage in becomes service.
This simple consummation is the best.

The simple way has led its votaries easily and naturally to their living conception of Humanity.

Rajjab says:

All the world is the Veda, all creations the Koran. Why read paper scriptures, O Rajjab.
Gather ever fresh wisdom from the Universe. The eternal wisdom shines within the concourse of the millions of Humanity.

The Baül sings:

The simple has its thirty million strings whose mingled symphony ever sounds.
Take all the creatures of the World into yourself. Drown yourself in that eternal music.

I conclude with a few more examples of Baül songs, esoteric and otherwise, from amongst many others of equal interest.

By Gangaram, the Namasudra:

Realize how finite and unbounded are One,
As you breathe in and out.
Of all ages, then, you will count the moments,
In every moment find the ages,
The drop in the ocean, the ocean in the drop.
If your endeavour be but *sahaj*, beyond argument and cogitation,
You will taste the precious quintessence.
Blinded are you by over-much journeying from bourne to bourne,
O Gangaram, be simple! Then alone will vanish all your doubts.

By Bisha, the disciple of Bala:

The Simple Man was in the Paradise of my heart,
Alas, how and when did I lose Him,
That now no peace I know, at home or abroad?
By meditation and telling of beads, in worship and travail,
The quest goes on for ever;
But unless the Simple Man comes of Himself,
Fruitless is it all;
For he yields not to forgetfulness of striving.
Bisha's heart has understood right well,
That by His own simple way alone is its door unlocked.

'Listen, O brother man', declares Chandidas, 'the Truth of Man is the highest of truths; there is no other truth above it.'

APPENDIX III

DADU AND THE MYSTERY OF FORM

[*From an article in the Visva-Bharati Quarterly by Professor Kshiti Mohan Sen.*w

THE LANGUAGE OF man has been mainly occupied with telling us about the elements into which the finite world has been analysed; nevertheless, now and again, it reveals glimpses of the world of the Infinite as well; for the spirit of man has discovered rifts in the wall of Matter. Our intellect can count the petals, classify the scent, and describe the colour of the rose, but its unity finds its expression when we rejoice in it.

The intellect at best can give us only a broken view of things. The marvellous vision of the Seer, in spite of the scoffing in which both Science and Metaphysics so often indulge, can alone make manifest to us the truth of a thing in its completeness. When we thus gain a vision of unity, we are no longer intellectually aware of detail, counting, classifying, or distinguishing—for them we have found admittance into the region of the spirit, and there we simply measure the truth of our realization by the intensity of our joy.

What is the meaning of this unutterable joy? That which we know by intellectual process is something outside ourselves. But the vision of anything in the fulness of its unity involves the realization of the unity of the self within, as well as of the relation between the two. The knowledge of the *many* may make us proud, but it makes us glad when our kinship with the *One* is brought home to us. Beauty is the name that we give to this acknowledgment of unity and of its relationship with ourselves.

It is through the beauty of Nature, or of Human Character, or Service, that we get our glimpses of the Supreme Soul whose essence is bliss. Or rather, it is when we become conscious of Him in Nature, or Art, or Service, that Beauty flashes out. And whenever we thus light upon the Dweller-within, all discord disappears and Love and Beauty are seen inseparable from Truth. It is really the coming of Truth to us as kinsman which floods our being with Joy.

This realization in Joy is immediate, self-sufficient, ultimate. When the self experiences Joy within, it is completely satisfied and has nothing more to ask from the outside world. Joy, as we know it, is a direct, synthetic measure of Beauty and neither awaits nor depends upon any analytical process. In our Joy further, we behold not only the unity, but also the origin, for the Beauty which tells us of Him can be nothing but radiance reflected, melody re-echoed, from Him; else would all this have been unmeaning indeed—Society, Civilization, Humanity. The progress of Man would otherwise have ended in an orgy of the gratification of his animal passions.

The power of realization, for each particular individual, is limited. All do not attain the privilege of directly apprehending the universal Unity. Nevertheless, a partial vision of it, say in a flower, or in a friend, is a common

experience; moreover, the potentiality is inherent in every individual soul, by dint of disciplined striving, to effect its own expansion and thereupon eventually to achieve the realization of the Supreme Soul.

By whom, meanwhile, are these ineffable tidings from the realm of the Spirit, the world of the Infinite, brought to us? Not by potentates or philosophers, but by the poor, the untutored, the despised. And with what superb assurance do they lead us out of the desert of the intellect into the paradise of the Spirit!

When our metaphysicians, dividing themselves into rival schools of Monism, Dualism or Monistic-Dualism, had joined together in dismissing the world as *Maya*, then, up from the depths of their social obscurity, rose these cobblers, weavers, and sewers of bags, proclaiming such theorems of the intellect to be all nonsense; for the metaphysicians had not seen with their own inner vision how the world overflowed with Truth and Love, Beauty and Joy.

Dadu, Ravidas, Kabir and Nanak were not ascetics; they bore no message of poverty, or renunciation, for their own sake; they were poets who had pierced the curtain of appearances and had glimpses of the world of Unity, where God himself is a poet. Their words cannot stand the glare of logical criticism; they babble, like babes, of the joy of their vision of Him, of the ecstasy into which His music has thrown them.

Nevertheless, it is they, not the scientists or philosophers, who have taught us of reality. On the one side the Supreme Soul is alone on the other my individual soul is alone. If the two do not come together, then indeed there befalls the greatest of all calamities, the utter emptiness of chaos. For all the abundance of His inherent joy, God is in want of my joy of Him; and Reality in its perfection only blossoms where we meet.

'When I look upon the beauty of this Universe', says Dadu, 'I cannot help asking: "How, O Lord, did you come to create it? What sudden wave of joy coursing through your being compelled its own manifestation? Was it really due to desire for self-expression, or simply on the impulse of emotion? Or was it perhaps just your fancy to revel in the play of form? Is this play then so delightful to you; or is it that you would see your own inborn delight thus take shape?" Oh, how can these questions be answered in words?' cries Dadu. 'Only those who know will understand.'

'Why not go to him who has wrought this marvel', says Dadu elsewhere, 'and ask: "Cannot your own message make clear this wondrous making of the One into the many?" When I look on creation as beauty of form. I see only Form and Beauty. When I look on it as life, everywhere I see Life. When I look on it as Brahma, then indeed is Dadu at a loss for words. When I see it in relation, it is of bewildering variety. When I see it in my own soul, all its variousness is merged in the beauty of the Supreme Soul. This eye of mine then becomes also the eye of Brahma, and in this exchange of mutual vision does Dadu behold Truth.'

The eye cannot see the face—for that purpose a mirror is necessary. That is to say, either the face has to be put at a distance from the eye, or the eye

moved away from the face—in any case what was one has to be made into two. The image is not the face itself, but how else is that to be seen?

So does God mirror Himself in Creation; and since He cannot place Himself outside His own Infinity, He can only gain a vision of Himself—and get a taste of His own joy—through my joy in Him and in His Universe. Hence the anxious striving of the devotee to keep himself thoroughly pure—not through any pride of puritanism, but because his soul is the playground where God would revel in Himself. Had not God's radiance, His beauty, thus found its form in the Universe, its joy in the devotee, He would have remained mere formless, colourless Being in the nothingness of infinity.

This is what makes the Mystery so profound, so inscrutable. Whether we say that only Brahma is true, or only the universe is true, we are equally far from the Truth, which can only be expressed as both *this* and *that*, or neither *this* nor *that*.

And Dadu can only hint at it by saying: 'Neither death nor life is He; He neither goes out, nor does He come in; nor sleeps, nor wakes; nor wants, nor is satisfied. He is neither I nor you, neither One nor Two. For no sooner do I say that all is One, than I find us both; and when I say there are two, I see we're One. So, O Dadu, rest content to look on Him just as He is, in the deep of your heart, and give up wrestling with vain imaginings and empty words.'

'Words shower', Dadu goes on, 'when spouts the fount of the intellect; but where realization grows, there music has its seat.' When the intellect confesses defeat, and words fail, then, indeed, from the depth of the heart wells up the song of the joy of realization. What words cannot make clear, melody can; to its strains one can revel in the vision of God in His revels.

'That is why', cries Dadu, 'your universe, this creation of yours, has charmed me so—your waters and your breezes, and this earth which holds them, with its ranges of mountains, its great oceans, its snow-capped poles, its blazing sun, because, through all the three regions of earth, sky and heaven, amidst all their multifarious life, it is your ministration, your beauty, that keeps me enthralled. Who can know you, O Invisible, Unapproachable, Unfathomable! Dadu has no desire to know; he is satisfied to remain enraptured with all this beauty of yours, and to rejoice in it with you.'

To look upon Form as the play of His love is not to belittle it. In creating the senses God did not intend them to be starved. 'And so', says Dadu, 'the eye is feasted with colour, the ear with music, the palate with flowers, wondrously provided.' And we find that the body longs for the spirit, the spirit for the body; the flower for the scent, the scent for the flower; our words for truth, the Truth for words; form for its ideal, the ideal for form; all thus mutual worship is but the worship of the ineffable Reality behind, by whose Presence every one of them is glorified. And Dadu struggles not, but simply keeps his heart open to this shower of love and thus rejoices in perpetual Springtime.

Every vessel of form the Formless fills with Himself, and in their beauty He gains them in return. With His love the Passionless fulfils every devoted heart and sets it a-dance, and their love streams back to the Colourless,

variegated with the tints of each. Beauteous Creation yields up her charms, in all their purity, to her Lord. Need she make further protestation, in words of their mutual love? So Dadu surrenders his heart, mind and soul at the feet of his Beloved. His one care is that they be not sullied.

If any one should object that evanescent Form is not worthy to represent the Eternal, Dadu would answer that it is just because Form is fleeting that it is a help, not a hindrance, to His worship. While returning back to its Origin, it captures our mind and takes it along with itself. The call of Beauty tells us of the Unthinkable, towards whom it lies. In passing over us, Death assures us of the truth of Life.

APPENDIX IV

NIGHT AND MORNING

[*An address in the Chapel of Manchester College, Oxford, on Sunday, May 25, 1930, by Rabindranath Tagore.*]

IN HIS EARLY youth, stricken with a great sorrow at the death of his grandmother, my father painfully groped for truth when his world had darkened, and his life lost its meaning. At this moment of despair a torn page of a manuscript carried by a casual wind was brought to his notice. The text it contained was the first verse of the Ishopanishad:

> *Īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*
> *Yat Kincha jagatyām jagat.*
> *tēna tyaktena bhunjīthā*
> *Mā gṛdhah Kasyasvitdhanam.*

It may be thus translated:

> Thou must know that whatever moves in this moving world is enveloped by God. And therefore find thy enjoyment in renunciation, never coveting what belongs to others.

In this we are enjoined to realize that all facts that move and change have their significance in their relation to one everlasting truth. For then we can be rid of the greed of acquisition, gladly dedicating everything we have to that Supreme Truth. The change in our mind is immense in its generosity of expression when an utter sense of vanity and vacancy is relieved at the consciousness of a pervading reality.

I remember once while on a boat trip in a strange neighbourhood I found myself unexpectedly at the confluence of three great rivers as the daylight faded and the night darkened over a desolation dumb and inhospitable. A sense of dread possessed the crew and an oppressive anxiety burdened my thoughts, with its unreasonable exaggeration all through the dark hours. The morning came and at once the brooding obsession vanished. Everything remained the same only the sky was filled with light.

The night had brought her peace, the peace of a black ultimatum in which all hope ceased in an abyss of nothingness, but the peace of the morning appeared like that of a mother's smile, which in its serene silence utters, 'I am here'. I realized why birds break out singing in the morning, and felt that their songs are their own glad answers to the emphatic assurance of a Yes in the morning light in which they find a luminous harmony of their own existence. Darkness drives our being into an isolation of insignificance and we are frightened because in the dark the sense of our own truth dwindles into a minimum. Within us we carry a positive truth, the consciousness of our personality, which naturally seeks from our surroundings its response in a

truth which is positive, and then in this harmony we find our wealth of reality and are gladly ready to sacrifice. That which distinguishes man from the animal is the fact that he expresses himself not in his claims, in his needs, but in his sacrifice, which has the creative energy that builds his home, his society, his civilization. It proves that his instinct acknowledges the inexhaustible wealth of a positive truth which gives highest value to existence. In whatever we are mean, greedy and unscrupulous, there are the dark bands in the spectrum of our consciousness; they prove chasms of bankruptcy in our realization of the truth that the world moves, not in a blank sky of negation, but in the bosom of an ideal spirit of fulfilment.

Most often crimes are committed when it is night. It must not be thought that the only reason for this is that in the dark they are likely to remain undetected. But the deeper reason is that in the dark the negative aspect of time weakens the positive sense of our own humanity. Our victims, as well as we ourselves, are less real to us in the night, and that which we miss within we desperately seek outside us. Wherever in the human world the individual self forgets its isolation, the light that unifies is revealed the light of the Everlasting Yes, whose sound-symbol in India is 'OM'. Then it becomes easy for man to be good not because his badness is restrained, but because of his joy in the positive background of his own reality, because his mind no longer dwells in a fathomless night of an anarchical world of denial.

Man finds an instance of this in the idea of his own country, which reveals to him a positive truth, the idea that has not the darkness of negation which is sinister, which generates suspicion, exaggerates fear, encourages uncontrolled greed; for his own country is an indubitable reality to him which delights his soul. In such intense consciousness of reality we discover our own greater self that spreads beyond our physical life and immediate present, and offers us generous opportunities of enjoyment in renunciation.

In the introductory chapter of our civilization individuals by some chance found themselves together within a geographic enclosure. But a mere crowd without an inner meaning of inter-relation is negative, and therefore it can easily be hurtful. The individual who is a mere component part of an unneighbourly crowd, who in his exclusiveness represents only himself, is apt to be suspicious of others, with no inner control in hating and hitting his fellow-beings at the very first sight. This savage mentality is the product of the barren spirit of negation that dwells in the spiritual night. But when the morning of mutual recognition broke out, the morning of co-operative life, that divine mystery which is the creative spirit of unity, imparted meaning to individuals in a larger truth named 'people'. These individuals gladly surrendered themselves to the realization of their true humanity, the humanity of a great wholeness composed of generations of men consciously and unconsciously building up a perfect future. They realized peace according to the degree of unity which they attained in their mutual relationship, and within that limit they found the one sublime truth which pervades time that moves, the things that change, the life that grows, the thoughts that flow onwards.

They united with themselves the surrounding physical nature in her hills and rivers, in the dance of rhythm in all her forms and colours, in the blue of her sky, the tender green of her corn shoots.

In gradual degrees men became aware that the subtle intricacies of human existence find their perfection in the harmony of interdependence, never in the vigorous exercise of elbows by a mutually pushing multitude, in the arrogant assertion of independence which fitly belongs to the barren rocks and deserts grey with the pallor of death.

For rampant individualism is against what is truly human—that is to say spiritual—it belongs to the primitive poverty of the animal life, it is the confinement of a cramped spirit, of restricted consciousness.

The limited boundaries of a race or a country within which the supreme truth of humanity has been more or less realized in the past are crossed to-day from the outside. The countries are physically brought closer to each other by science. But science has not brought with it the light that helps understanding. On the contrary science on its practical side has raised obstacles among them against the development of a sympathetic knowledge.

But I am not foolish enough to condemn science as materialistic. No truth can be that. Science means intellectual probity in our knowledge and dealings with the physical world and such conscientiousness has a spiritual quality that encourages sacrifice and martyrdom. But in science the oft-used half-truth that honesty is the best policy is completely made true and our mind's honesty in this field never fails to bring us the best profit for our living. Mischief finds its entry through this back-door of utility, tempting the primitive in man, arousing his evil passions. And through this the great meeting of races has been obscured of its great meaning. When I view it in my mind I am reminded of the fearful immensity of the meeting of the three mighty rivers where I found myself unprepared in a blackness of universal menace. Over the vast gathering of peoples the insensitive night darkly broods, the night of unreality. The primitive barbarity of limitless suspicion and mutual jealousy fills the world's atmosphere to-day—the barbarity of the aggressive individualism of nations, pitiless in its greed, unashamed of its boastful brutality.

Those that have come out for depredation in this universal night have the indecent audacity to say that such conditions are eternal in man, that the moral ideals are only for individuals but that the race belongs to the primitive nature of the animal.

But when we see that in the range of physical power man acknowledges no limits in his dreams, and is not even laughed at when he hopes to visit the neighbouring planet; must he insult his humanity by proclaiming that human nature has reached its limit of moral possibility? We must work with all our strength for the seemingly impossible; we must be sure that faith in the perfect builds the path for the perfect—that the external fact of unity which has surprised us must be sublimated in an internal truth of unity which would light up the Truth of Man the Eternal.

Nations are kept apart not merely by international jealousy, but also by their *Karma*, their own past, handicapped by the burden of the dead. They find it hard to think that the mentality which they fondly cultivated within the limits of a narrow past has no continuance in a wider future, they are never tired of uttering the blasphemy that warfare is eternal, that physical might has its inevitable right of moral cannibalism where the flesh is weak. The wrong that has been done in the past seeks to justify itself by its very perpetuation, like a disease by its chronic malignity, and it sneers and growls at the least proposal of its termination. Such an evil ghost of a persistent past, the dead that would cling to life, haunts the night to-day over mutually alienated countries, and men that are gathered together in the dark cannot see each other's faces and features.

We in India are unfortunate in not having the chance to give expression to the best in us in creating intimate relations with the powerful nations, whose preparations are all leading to an enormous waste of resources in a competition of brow-beating and bluff. Some great voice is waiting to be heard which will usher in the sacred light of truth in the dark hours of the nightmare of politics, the voice which will proclaim that 'God is over all', and exhort us never to covet, to be great in renunciation that gives us the wealth of spirit, strength of truth, leads us from the illusion of power to the fullness of perfection, to the *Sāntam*, who is peace eternal, to the *Advaitam* who is the infinite One in the heart of the manifold. But we in India have not yet had the chance. Yet we have our own human voice which truth demands. The messengers of truth have ever joined hands across centuries, across the seas, across historical barriers, and they help to raise up the great continent of human brotherhood from *avidyā*, from the slimy bottom of spiritual apathy. We individuals, however small may be our power and whatever corner of the world we may belong to, have a claim upon us to add to the light of the consciousness that comprehends all humanity. And for this cause I ask your co-operation, not only because co-operation gives us strength in our work, but because co-operation itself is the best aspect of the truth we represent; it is an end and not merely the means.

Let us keep our faith firm in the objectivity of the source of our spiritual ideal of unity, though it cannot be proved by any mathematical logic. Let us proclaim in our conduct that it has already been given to us to be realized, like a song which has only to be mastered and sung, like the morning which has only to be welcomed by raising the screens, opening the doors.

The idea of a millennium is treasured in our ancient legends. The instinct cradled and nourished in them has profound meaning. It is like the instinct of a chick which dimly feels that an infinite world of freedom is already given to it, truer than the narrow fact of its immediate life within the egg. An agnostic chick has the rational right to doubt it, but at the same time it cannot help pecking at its shell. The human soul, confined in its limitation, has also dreamt of millennium, and striven for a spiritual emancipation which seems impossible of attainment, and yet it feels its reverence for some ever-present

source of inspiration in which all its experience of the true, the good and beautiful finds its reality.

And therefore it has been said by the Upanishad: 'Thou must know that God pervades all things that move and change in this moving world; find thy enjoyment in renunciation, covet not what belongs to others.'

Ya ēkō varnō bahudhā ṣaktiyogāt
Varṇān aṇēkān nihitārthō dadhāti.
Vichaiti chāntē viṣvamādau sa dēvaḥ
Sa nō buddhyā ṣubhayā samyunaktu.

He who is one, and who dispenses the inherent needs of all peoples and all times, who is in the beginning and the end of all things, may he unite us with the bond of truth, of common fellowship, of righteousness.

Man

LECTURE I

MAN

THE ROAD IS ever extended to the outside and has no meaning within itself. Its significance is reached when it reaches the home where begins the manifestation of the inward. When the course of evolution advanced to the stage of Man its character changed, it shifted its emphasis mainly from the body to the mind. There is relentless competition among them, where creatures struggle to preserve their physical integrity. But in their mind it becomes possible for them to realize their unity and their fulfilment in mutual co-operation. In the world of Man individuals are conscious of a comprehensive truth which is spiritual and whose members they are themselves. The best expression of Man therefore is that which does not exclusively represent an isolated mind, but can be accepted by the minds of men of all times. To set up creeds and practices to which the universal mind cannot respond is what we call barbarism.

Once, seeking perfection, Man engaged in external forms, in rituals and ceremonies. At last, in the language of the *Gita*, he declared that the sacrifice which is comprehended in the inner culture (ज्ञान यज्ञ) is superior to material sacrifices (द्रव्यमय यज्ञ). In the words of Christ, he heard that purity lies, not in external commands and prohibitions, but in the sanctifying of the heart. This was the invocation of the universal Personality in the mind of the individual person. The final utterance of this very consciousness is that he alone knows Truth who realizes in his own soul those of others, and in the soul of others, his own.

The aspect of man which has surpassed the animal grows with its ideal. It is an aspiration for that which is not evident in his material world nor urgent for his physical life, it belongs to his universal self.

In the *Rigveda* we find of this universal Being:

पादोऽस्य विश्वाभूतानि।
त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि॥

A quarter of him is in the apparent world, the remainder subsists above in the form of immortality. This is proved when the individual man at a great cost of himself thinks the thoughts of all men, fulfils the desire of the many and gives form to the joy that is for every one. The extent to which his trend is in the opposite direction, towards the narrow distinctions of time and place, to that extent he is a barbarian.

The human body is a universe inhabited by millions of cells. Each of them is instinct with its own individual life and yet with a deep direction towards a mystery of unity. If they had self-consciousness they would have been conscious of their separateness and at the same time of their identity with the whole body. The latter fact could only have been possible through an unaccountable indication of relationship, though the complete and direct knowledge of the whole body would surely be beyond the power of those cells.

For, this body exists not only here and now, but its past persists in it, its future awaits it. There is also a common element of general felicity pervading the whole system which cannot be analysed and which is what we mean by health. Besides this each cell embodies a spirit of self-dedication to the purpose of the maintenance of life's wholeness. If we try to grasp the mystery of this career, we can understand that the truest nature of these minute bodies centres round something which we can call their universal aspect.

It is the same with Man. He has observed the deeper endeavour of his own heart and felt that he is not exclusively an individual: he is also one in spirit with the universal Man, under whose inspiration the individual engages in expressing his ultimate truth through crossing nature's limitations. To these expressions he gives the name of the true, the good, the beautiful, not only from the point of view of the preservation and enrichment of society, but from the completeness of his own self.

Let us imagine the creature as if he is born, lives and dies in a railway carriage. This train travels towards a fixed destination along a definite narrow route. The head of the animal is parallel to the floor of the carriage, his vision is stretched downward, and he carries on his quest of food and recreation within the limits of the car. Even in this restricted sphere, opposition and danger are many, and his time is taken up in struggling with them. He cannot lift up his head and stand up-right like man. His vision does not reach up to the window above. The impulse of his mind does not take him beyond the needs of the security of life.

Man has stood up and found the window in front. He has come to know that the universe is not confined within the carriage. Outside it, vistas on vistas open out. Would it have mattered if he had remained indifferent to the 'beyond' which serves no immediate need? But in defiance of the sharply-mapped dominion of the Life Force he ventured out to find his own autonomy. In this triumphal march, his natural instincts do not side with him. On this path, he knows neither comfort nor rest, and yet hundreds of explorers are continually widening the path and opening it up even at the cost of their own lives.

By stooping downward, the animal sees things piecemeal and separate, and his smell is allied to his sight. Visual perception is relatively disinterested and is therefore the more important in the kingdom of knowledge. Affection through smell is within the borders of the physical faculties. The awareness of objects which animals obtain through smell and sight is essentially in the interest of immediate needs. By lifting up his head, man no longer saw merely separate and distinct objects; he also had a complete view of the unity of manifold things. He saw himself at the centre of an undivided extension. The erect man prized the distant more than the near. His mind turned towards the unknown and unexpected. It is not only his sight, but also his two hands that have found liberation. If the hands had not gained exemption from the tasks of the feet, they would have been in a subordinate position in the body, a fourth caste with the indignity attached to the untouchable. In the human

body, the *śūdra* was elevated to *Kṣattriyahood.* He found the dignity of the hand and entered into partnership with the mind. He no longer remained a whole-time servant in the routine of daily life. He became busy with experiments on the unexpected, with construction of the unthought of, with largely the useless. Animals also have plenty of leisure when they can play, but in their life, play is secondary. Besides, their play also represents the tendencies of their life's needs. The sport of the kitten is to play at catching imaginary rats, and the pup finds its joy in the loud pretence of fighting its own tail. But what may be called recreation of man, what serves no useful purpose in his life, only too often becomes primary and becomes even more insistent than the routine of his daily life. In the foreground of his leisure, man is everywhere busy in building up his paradise,—there lies the garden of his imaginings. From this we infer that Nature may control man's supply of food, and for the sake of the body, he may be forced to meet her exactions; but the freehold temple-land where man has his spiritual home is outside nature's domain. There is no risk of urgent summons there from many overlord. The greatest obligation there is a voluntary obligation. It is the challenge of the ideal, the challenge of humanity, the ignoring of the greed of things in the endeavour after the realization by man, of his universal self.

In the animal world, the nebula of consciousness is diffused in indistinct light. That nebula was concentrated in man and declared in the language of radiant light, अयमह भो—'Here am I.' In the history of man there began from that day in many forms, in many ways and many languages the answers to the one fundamental question, 'What am I?' In the true answer to this question lies his joy, his glory. He has understood that he is not simple, but hides a mystery of depth within himself, and that he will finally know himself only when the veils of the mystery have been pierced. Through centuries he has persisted in this attempt. He has founded innumerable religions and institutions. He protests against his natural instincts and tried to force on himself the recognition that, in truth, he is far greater than what he externally appears to be. He is trying to accept in his mind the idea of Being who is ideally far greater than himself and yet intimately related to him. It is by what he adores that he proves wherein, in his own estimation, lies his truth. Needless to say, that sometimes in the attempt to answer this question, the object of adoration that he imagines, reveals a mind which is blind in its intelligence, vulgar in its morality and deformed in its ideal of beauty. Such answer we shall regard as mistaken. Like all mistakes, these must also be rectified by a universal standard of truth, goodness and beauty.

When the physical side was of primary importance in the evolution of animal life, many animals degenerated or died out as the result of some maladjustment in their bodily constitution. When in the course of evolution the conscious self, or 'I' appeared in man, any mistake about this self led and leads to a death far greater than bodily destruction. All great prophets have given the same strange answer that the mistake lies in the obstacles to knowing the self in the not-self. The unceasing attempt of man to remove such obstacles

and to find his truth beyond himself is represented in most of his institutions.

Animals live on the terrestrial globe, but man lives in what he calls his country. This country is not geographic, but spiritual. It is enriched with the currents of thought and love that have flowed through the ages. Countless is the number of those who have gone through suffering and death in order to prove the truth of the Person who is immortal in them, and the country is the creation of their sacrifice. Irrespective of caste or colour, their thoughts and their achievements belong to all men. Human beings live in a country which means a region where each man exists beyond the boundaries of his time and place, a region where his learning and his endeavours become true in the communion of all men of all times. The past and the future equally belong to the World-Man. Man likes to think that his ideal of perfection has already been realized in same departed past. This is why we find that in the mythologies of almost all races the golden age is imagined in the past. These legends express the aspiration of man that what is established before the beginnings of time, shall be continuously tested throughout its limitless flow. Though man no longer admits that the golden age is in the past, yet in all his strivings after excellence there is an implicit expectation of the golden age to come in future. A person may be an atheist and yet there is no lack of instance that he does not consider it a loss to sacrifice his immediate present, only because he feels that he exists more truly in that unarrived future.

The major aspects of the Supreme man are yet unrevealed. The hope of revealing him extends continually to the future. The Supreme man is to come. His chariot is on the move, but He has not yet arrived. The marriage party is continually gathering, its members are waiting for ages in the distance one hears the music of the bridegroom's march. Messengers go forward on the difficult path to receive Him and lead Him to the feast. This urgency of man towards the indefinite future counts no cost of life, this quest of his final certainty in the midst of the uncertain and the unarrived knows no rest. Man meets with obstacles again and again on his dangerous way; again and again he finds himself baffled and yet he cannot give up his quest. This perseverance might have been called mere madness, but man has given to it the name of greatness. We find man's mind continually attracted by a sense of perfection not yet attained, like the natural groping of the plant in a dark room towards the light beyond the walls. The light is true. If the source from which the attraction of the perfect continually radiates be not equally true, the thoughts that men think, the tasks they undertake for the refinement of the spirit over and above the needs of bare existence, all become utterly meaningless. From time to time we reach this truth in our resolves, in our meditations, in our ideals. In the glow of suffering, in the glory of death, we perceive this ineffable spirit of perfection. It has taken our knowledge out of its narrow roost and given it freedom in a wider field. Otherwise the art of cookery would have found from men more acceptance than the science of the molecule. Today man's final physical analysis has arrived at mathematical symbols. Once man had placed the theory of light beyond intelligibility. He made the curious

statement that vibrations in the ether are felt by us as light. Light which reveals all material things in the field of our vision turned out to be the manifestation of something which is utterly beyond our comprehension. We only know through experience that waves of different rhythms form it. It is further reported now that to call it mere wave-radiation does not give a full account of the nature of light; it also radiates minute corpuscles. All these contradictory statements are beyond the simple language of the ordinary intelligence of man. But man was not to be frightened by the deep water of the unintelligible. He declared the stone wall to be the unceasing dance of electrons and never for a moment suspected that he had perhaps turned insane. It never occurred to him that perhaps Reason is an acrobat in the circus of the mind, that is profession is to turn everything upside down. If animals were placed in judgment over man, they would have characterized him as born insane. In fact, human science has proved all men to be creatures possessed by a universal dementia. It prompts them to say that things are not at all what they appear to be, but just the reverse. Animals never declare such libel about themselves. To their instinct a thing is what is, in other words, for them only facts exist. The area of their world is confined to its surface. All their obligations are at its groundfloor.

As with other animals fact constitutes man's resources, and yet his wealth consists in truth. The ultimate aim of wealth is not to satisfy needs but to convey the sense of splendour. That is why man declares भूमैव सुखम्—that there is no happiness in littleness, it lies in immensity.

These are after all the words of a spendthrift. Caution tells us that it is a matter for congratulation when our needs agree in measure with what we have. There is a proverb in English that the enough is as good as a feast. Our *Śāstras* also tell us सुखार्थी संयतो भवेत्—that he who seeks happiness must be contented.

We thus seem to meet the two contradictory statements that happiness does and does not lie in contentment. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that there is a basic duality in man's being. In the aspect of man which belongs to animal life, the satisfaction of his necessities is adequate to his happiness. But in his heart of hearts, man the animal reaches up to the World-Man. There he no longer wants mere happiness, but something greater. He wants magnificence. That is why of all animals man alone is intemperate. He wants profusely and has to give profusely, for in him there is the Infinite man. This Infinite Man does not hanker after happiness, nor is he afraid of suffering. This Infinite Man shatters the shelters of comfort which men build, and continuously calls them out to an architecture of a difficult design. The little man who is also in us laughs in mockery at this wasting of our substance in wild-goose chase. But he laughs in vain.

In the Upanishad there is a question and answer about God: सभगव: कस्मिन् प्रतिष्ठित इति—'Where does God have his seat?' The answer comes, स्वे महिम्नि —'In his own glory.' This glory is his nature, and his nature is his joy.

Man's delight is also in his glory. That is why it is said that happiness is in

immensity. But the nature to which glory belongs is realized by man only through strain and struggle. Only through great suffering is measured the truth of his happiness. There is continual tension between man's natural condition and his true character. That is why the path of religion, the path dictated by his inmost nature is called the path that is difficult of crossing,— दुर्गं पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति।

The nature of an animal conforms to its condition. Its claims never exceed what is due to it. But with man it is different. He puts forward claims far beyond what was due to him by nature. The portion allotted to one can be fixed, but there is no limit to the extras one may demand. Man finds sustenance for life from his allotted portion. But it is his extras that reveal his glory. Even in respect of keeping himself alive, man exacts many extras. He must live magnificently, for this his sustenance must not be commonplace. It is not enough that his dress and his dwelling should merely serve their barest purposes: they must also reveal his greatness, reveal something which is worthy of man; and a greater portion of the activities of his life is engaged in crossing the boundaries of a passive existence where there is a provision for enough, but none for the feast. Man has an inherent distrust of what is offered to his senses, what lies spread before his instincts on the surface of existence. For he himself is not superficial, he realizes that deep within him there is something which he calls truth and which is often the opposite of what seems to be the fact.

The friction of trees produces fire. If the human intellect had accepted the merest fact that the fire is produced, and asked no further questions, we could not take it to task. It is not known because there is nothing to know, is a statement whose propriety cannot be doubted. But man must have extras in his department of knowledge, the extras, which at least for the time being is utterly unnecessary. And like a child, man repeatedly asked, 'Why should friction produce fire?' Thus began for intelligence its labour of love. Perhaps the first answers given were childish. Perhaps he said that an angry spirit dwelt invisibly within the tree and its fury flames up when it is provoked. Human mythology is full of answers like this. Those whose intelligence refuses to grow beyond that of a child, for ever cling to such answers. But inspite of the stupidity which is easily satisfied, man's questioning surmounts all obstacles and slowly pushes forward. As a result, the amount of energy he has spent in order to find out the answer to the perfectly useless question 'why fire burns' has certainly not been less than that spent for lighting the fire in his kitchen. Perhaps this has led to the kitchen fire dying out before the food was ready, while the pangs of hunger became keener and keener: but he persisted in his question, 'Why does fire burn?' The fire before him cannot give any answer, for the answer can be found only by going far beyond the experienced fact.

The foolhardiness of this strange intelligence becomes clearest when it disturbs man himself and asks, 'Who are *you*?' It does not even hesitate to tell him, 'you may think you exist, but do you really do so? And if you do, where is your existence?' We have quoted before the answer which the Atharvaveda

gives to this question. It says, one aspect of Man's self is seen directly here, but the other is the vast unseen.

Let us try to understand this clearly:

Here is land, here is water. Here is this and here is that. In like manner we may point at all objects and use the pronoun इदं 'This' with regard to it. We must understand clearly and know all objects whatsoever to which we can point and say 'this,' be it water, be it land, be it this or that. Otherwise we cannot live properly. But simultaneously man declares, तद्विद्धि— 'Know That.' But what? नेदं यदिदमुपासते—That is not that which we can define as इदं, as 'this.' It is a simple statement of a fact, that *I hear*. Yet man insists that its final analysis takes us where the pronoun 'it' cannot reach. Like one possessed he asks 'Where is श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं—the audition of the hearing?' His physical researches lead him to vibrations in the air. But even here we have इदं the pronoun, we have 'this vibration.' But the vibration is not hearing. We attain to him who says, '*I hear*.' But in what does the truth of that *I* lie?

A stone falls down from above. The keeper who guards the gates of wisdom gives the report of the news—it has fallen. With regard to it the downward attraction is manifested. Here the task of the gatekeeper ends. But in the inner courts, the cry rings out, 'Transcending all the instances of इदं of this fall and his other fall, *one* attraction alone pervades throughout the universe.'

To know this *one* among the many is what the *Upaniṣad* calls प्रतिबोध विदितं, to know the one unique as true in the perception of each one unique as true in the perception of each particular hearing,—yours and mine, then and now—it is this universal, श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं the truth which is the audition of hearing. About it, the *Upaniṣad* says, अन्यदेव तद्विदितादथो अविदितादधि. It is distinct from all that we know and all that we do not know. Even in the physical science, it is not only that we cannot reconcile its hidden secrets with our direct experience, but we are forced to admit that they are contrary to it.

Man's discovery and utilization of the hidden forces of nature contribute to his well-being. The truth which constitutes the well-being of his soul is also hidden: it can be realized only through endeavour. To this endeavour man give the name spiritual discipline (धर्मसाधना).

The root-meaning of the word *dharma* is nature. It sounds self-contradictory to say that one's *nature* is to be realized through *effort*, through discipline; this seems like finding nature by transcending it. The Christian Scriptures have condemned the nature of man, for its original sin and disobedience. The Indian Scriptures also prescribe the repudiation of nature in order to realize truth in us. Man has no respect for what he is by nature.

It is said—

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्य मेतस्
तौ सम्परीत्य विविनक्ति धीर. ।

* * *

तयो. श्रेय आददानस्य साधु भवति
दीयतेऽर्थाद् य उ प्रेयो वृणीते ।

In human nature there is that which is desirable and the other which is desired. The wise man keeps the two separate.

* * *

He who accepts the good is pure, he who accepts evil falls short of his true worth.

These statements we regard as familiar maxims of morality, we think they have value only as principles of human conduct. But this verse was not uttered in reference to social conduct of man. This verse discusses how we can truly know the soul.

The desire for that which satisfies our animal instincts is active in human nature. But striving for the good which *ought* to be desired is also to be found there. It is not that man adds to his possessions by accepting the good: it is that he *becomes* something. This is called 'being साधु.' This does not make him rich, it does not make him powerful, it may or may not bring honour in society, in fact it may very possibly bring insult and indignity. Complete understanding of goodness is not possible in the realm of nature. On the other hand, acceptance of evil makes man something else—something which the Upanisads call 'falling short of one's true meaning.' The truth which we understand by the term man is degraded in one who identifies himself with evil. Goodness lies in realizing in oneself the humanity which is universal and of all times: degradation is in the failure to realize the Universal Man. All this would have no meaning unless man had a spiritual self over and above his natural self.

Man's endeavour strives from one nature towards another. It is only when his enquiries go beyond individual inclinations that his science is founded on universal knowledge. It is only when his efforts take him beyond all personal interests and the inertia of customary habit that he becomes विश्वकर्मा, a world-worker. It is only when his love transcends his self-seeking that man becomes a Mahatma—a great soul—through his relationship with all creatures. One nature of man obscures him, the other gives freedom.

The astronomer observed that a planet had deviated from its orbit. He asserted with conviction that it was due to the attraction of some other unseen planet. It was observed that the mind of man also did not move along the course prescribed by its nature for the preservation of life. It deviated towards the uncertain, towards the transcendent. This led man to imagine the realm of the Spirit. He asserted that commands came from there, it was there that his centre of being lay. Men wrangle and fight to decide who it is that presides over that realm. Whoever He may be and whatever name we might give to Him, He did not let man rest within the limits of animal life.

The sea becomes restless. There is the continual ebb and flow of the tides. The restlessness of the sea would by itself prove the attraction of the moon, even if that remained invisible. Even the new-born babe knows instinctively that the hunger which indubitably is in him has an object that is real also in the external world. Man's lifelong efforts have often been directed to things which have no connections whatever with his immediate physical needs. A life

transcending death leads him on to the paths of adventure, not for the sake of self-preservation, but for the sake of immortality.

In Vedic language God has been called *Avih*, denoting that his nature is Revelation. About him it has been said—यस्य नाम महद्यश:—His great glory is His name: His truth is in his great expression. It is the same with the nature of man: it is to reveal the glory of his soul. The creature preserves his life by taking in food from outside, the soul reveals itself by pouring itself out, and crossing nature's limits. Even the savage in his own way wants to transcend nature for the sake of his self-glorification, which according to him is the expression of his truth. He pierces his own nose and sticks in it a rod. Through a painful process he sharpens his teeth. He flattens his infant skull between wooden boards and deforms it. He concocts strange garments and hideous ornaments and endures insufferable pain and discomfort in putting them on. In all this he attempts to declare that he is potentially greater than what he can normally be. This greater self of man is contrary to nature. The God whom he exalts as his ideal is equally strange. A nursling of nature and yet man has this fighting attitude which always seeks to defy nature. Here in India we see people, some with lifted arm, some lying on a bed of thorns, some hanging with head down towards a raging fire. They declare in this way their superiority, their saintliness, only because they are unnatural. In the modern European countries also, there are people who glory in facing unnecessary hardship, which are called breaking records. Most of these they perform in order to glorify unnaturalness. The peacock feels proud in being peacock: ferocious animals exalt in the success of their ferocity. But Man prides that in his exaggerations he is more real than in his normal reality.

There is no limit to man's presumption in the economic as in the physical sphere. Here also breaking records means to vault over all the barriers prescribed by the past history of past achievements. The effort in this field is not exactly for the unnatural, rather it is for the unusual. Here we find impatience with limitations. But whatever is material and external, must in its very nature be limited. These limits can be extended, but they cannot be transcended. Jesus has said that the kingdom of heaven is as inaccessible to the rich as the eye of a needle for a camel to pass through. The reason for this is that the rich man is accustomed to realize and reveal his humanity through something which is the opposite to the immeasurable. To be huge like the elephant is not regarded by man as being a great man, though perhaps some savages might think so.

In the world which is the field of his ego, man boasts of his bulk, but in the world where his spirit dwells, his perfection is in greatness which cannot be measured by dimension. Beauty and excellence, heroism and sacrifice reveal the soul of man: they transcend the isolated man and realize the Universal Man who dwells in the inmost heart of all individuals.

All around him, other creatures roam about in search of the means of livelihood. Man goes about for ages to seek the *One* in his inmost heart who निहितार्थो दधाति, who gives to him his inner meaning. It signifies that man is great

and he must prove that in him dwells the Eternal Man, the Universal Man, the Man who is beyond the bounds of death. We attain our unity with this dweller of our heart to the extent that we realize truth in knowledge and feeling. All the misfortunes of man are caused by the obscuration of the Inner Man, through searching Him in external forms, in making strangers of our ownselves. Then we seek ourselves in money, in fame, and in the physical means of enjoyment. Once I heard a wandering beggar sing the lament of the man who scatters himself and loses the touch of the Eternal within him:—

> Where shall I find Him ; Him who is the Man of my heart. Because I have lost him, I wander in strange and far-off lands in his quest.

It is from one of these illiterate villagers that I heard the line तोरि भितर अतल सागर—an unfathomed sea is there within you. It was the same *Baul* who sang: मनेर मध्ये मनेर मानुष करो अन्वेषसा,—Seek for the inner man in your inner heart. It is the same as the prayer of the quest which is in the *Upaniṣad*: आविरावीर्म एधि—May his manifestation in me be completely fulfilled whose nature is self-revelation.

LECTURE II

SUPREME MAN

THE SCIENTIST SOLVES the mystery of a piece of iron and says that it is nothing but the constant movements of electric particles of a special rhythm. The intervals between them in such a system are, in proportion to their size, immense. If our unaided eyes could see what has been discovered by scientific vision, then, like the individuals in human society, we should have seen the particles as distinct and separate. However distinct these may be, a force,—for let us call it a force—is working among them. It is a relating force,—the community force of the piece of iron. When we see the piece of iron, we do not see the multitude of electrons, we see the mass. In fact, the visible appearance of the iron is a symbol; it is not what it ultimately is. To take an analogy we are given a ten-rupee note. He knows it truly who at sight recognizes the piece of paper as a symbol of unity that represents ten separate silver coins.

We see the piece of iron to be iron, and yet it is only a physical symbol revealing the mysterious spirit of relationship which cannot be seen by the bodily eye. Likewise, the distinctions of time and place between individual men are very great, and yet there is a large and deep unity encompassing all men. This unity, imperceptible by the senses, is not that of a numerical aggregate, for it transcends all aggregates. Those who have in them the great capacity of feeling within themselves the one Spirit in all men, are the people to whom we give the name *Mahātmā* or Great Soul. It is they who can lay down their lives for the good of all men. It is they who can address the comprehensive spirit within and without them and say :

तदेतत् प्रेय. पुत्रात् प्रेयो वित्तात् प्रयोऽन्यस्मात् सर्वस्मादन्तरतरं यदयमात्मा

He is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than all else is this spirit who is in our inmost heart.

The scientist condemns such statements. He says that we attribute humanity to God in calling Him our Beloved. I reply that it is not *attributing*, but *realizing* humanity. It is by developing the sense of the dignity of his human truth that man has attained to his God. The human mind cannot therefore protest against the attribution of humanity to his God, and it would not be at all true if he did so. Man does not attribute lighthood to the vibrations of ether, he feels and uses the vibrations themselves as light and is not deceived in such use.

There is the ultimate world entity even beyond the immediate entity of man, as we have the stellar sphere beyond the solar system. But it is primarily the solar system of which the earth is a part, it is solar heat that is the life of the earth, and it is the solar connection that governs the earth's movements and its day and night. We have knowledge of the stellar sphere, but it is the solar system we fully comprehend with our body and our mind. Similarly, the

greatness which is supremely cosmical is for us an object of knowledge, but the greatness which is human is a matter for the fulfilment of all our body, mind and character.

But even the impersonal world with regard to which we can trace no distinctions of good and evil, beautiful and ugly, about which nothing more can be said beyond the fact that it exists, is bounded by human knowledge. And therefore by knowing it we become aware of the extension of our own consciousness and we are glad. The world we know or hope to know sometime through scientific experience is itself a human world. *Man* alone perceives this world in the form of *his* thought within the scaffoldings of *his* Understanding and Reason. It is possible to conceive of a mind which perceives a world that is beyond the range of our mathematical measurements and does not exist in the space which *we* know. But how shall we call extra-human the world whose fundamental truths are found by man in conformity with the innate principles of his thought? That is why a modern scientist describes the universe as the creation of mathematical mind. But even this mathematical mind is not beyond the bounds of the human mind. If it were, then we could not have at all known the scientific theory of the world, like the dogs and cats who can never reach it.

The true character of Him who is the Qualified Reality, *Saguṇa Brahma*, is defined in our scripture as *Sarvendriyaguṇbāhāsam*. All the qualities which belong to the external and internal faculties of man have their suggestion in Him. The very meaning of this is that the ultimate Truth for us is *human* Truth, and that is why this world we know is necessarily a *human* world. Even if there be any other world beside this, it is non-existent for us, not only for today, but for ever.

We give the name Love to that relation of one soul to another which is the deepest and truest. Our actual acquaintance with the physical world is through sense perception, but our true comprehension of the spiritual world is through love. In the love of his parents, man begins his acquaintance with the spiritual world from the very moment of his birth. Here we find immeasurable mystery,—the contact of the indescribable. The question may arise, wherein lies the basis of the truth of parenthood. It must be in Him, who is पितृतम पितृणाम् who contains the perfection of the fatherhood of all fathers. We can understand the characteristics of this earth to which we are born by scrutinizing it from outside, but the mystery of parenthood we can comprehend only in the depth of our own spirit, and it is there in this depth that we realize the Supreme Father. This Supreme Father does not dwell in any particular heaven, nor is He to be found in the history of any particular time or country. He has not expressed Himself once and for good in any particular individual but extends His love over the past and future of humanity and pervades the whole world of man.

We hear of the God of man:

यद् यद् विभूतिमत् सत्त्व श्रीमद् ऊर्जितमेव वा
तत्तदेवोवगच्छ त्व मम तेजोंशसम्भवम् ।

Whatever has splendour, has beauty and excellence, is born of an aspect of my own divine energy.

In the universe there are many things great and small. So far as bare existence is concerned, they all have the same worth. From the point of view of mere actuality, there is no distinction for better or worse between the lotus and the clod of earth. But man has in his mind a standard of value, which does not judge by need nor by the measurement of size or degree. In man, there is the sense of perfection transcending all quantitative standards—a consciousness of the inmost satisfaction. This is what he means by excellence, and yet we find no unanimity of opinion about this excellence. How then can we say that this excellence is based upon an impersonal and eternal truth which is in the universal man.

We know all scientific truths have passed through innumerable errors. In fact, the errors are many, the truth is one. The errors are personal, the truth belongs to the all. The astronomer wants to study the planet with his telescope, but he has many obstacles to overcome. In our sky there are the dust of the earth, the enveloping atmosphere, the veils of vapour and many kinds of disturbances all around. Defects are possible in the instrument, and the mind which observes is clouded by its predispositions. Pure truth can be attained only when all the obstacles—internal and external—have been overcome.

It is easy to admit that the realization of pure truth is the manifestation of the universal mind, but it is possible to doubt whether in aesthetic experience, we realize the universal mind. How can there be an absolute standard of beauty when our sense of joy in it often varies with the country, time and the individual? And yet, when we look at human history over a large period, we find that the minds of all artists of all times tend to agree in their judgement of the merit of artistic beauty. It has to be admitted that it is not absolutely every man that finds complete joy in an artistic creation. Many have minds blind to beauty: their personal preferences do not agree with universal appreciation. There are also among men many who are naturally impervious to science. Their conceptions of the world are confusingly irrelevant and antagonistic, because their minds are prejudiced, for the prejudice of one does not agree with that of another. Yet they are so inordinately vain of the truth of their own particular wrong view that they are prepared to go to any lengths in support of their doctrine. Similarly, there is no lack of persons in the world with naturally deficient taste. In their case also, differences of opinion become dangerous. We cannot question the universal perfection of knowledge simply because there are different levels of born stupidity, of every variety, from the lowest to the highest. It is the same with regard to the ideal of beauty.

Bertrand Russell has expressed in some writing of his, that Beethoven's symphonies cannot be regarded as creations of the Universal Mind, for they are personal to him. Russell means that a symphony is not like a mathematical truth, which is an object to all minds and has the mind of the individual as merely the occasion of its formulation. But it has to be admitted that everyone

ought to appreciate Beethoven's creation, that if there is no natural deficiency of the mind, everyone must appreciate it when with proper training the opposition of ignorance and unaccustomedness have been dispelled, then it must also be admitted that the appreciation of the best composer is to be fully met with in the mind of Man and is impeded only in some particular men as listeners.

The intellect is indispensable for the preservation of life, but there are many instances of worldly success in spite of an imperfect sense of beauty. The sense of beauty has no sanction of vital urgency, nor does licence in this sphere carry with it its own necessary punishment. And yet a stupendous amount of effort is being applied to the task of creating beauty although in the maintenance of life it serves no purpose: only its influence is for transforming our inner being.

In the *Upaniṣads* we again and again find mention of this attainment through being. From these we understand that man is one in spirit with the Supreme Object of his strivings.

नाविरतो दुश्चरितान् नाशान्तो नासमाहित: ।
नाशान्तमानसो वापि प्रज्ञानेनैनमाप्नुयात् ।।

It is said that He cannot be reached through mere knowledge. He has to be realized through the perfection of being, by refraining from evil conduct, by achieving a steadfast mind through the control of the passions. In other words, this realization is the attainment of one's eternal truth.

I have stated before that we must remove all impurities and disturbances of the environment and all individual idiosyncrasies if we want to see physical truth in its purity. This applies even more to spiritual truth. It is when we attribute to spiritual truth the perversions arising out of our lower nature that our mistakes become most dangerous. We can understand how much more ruinous that mistakes in knowledge are our mistakes in being when we find that the very forces which we have brought under our control through science become our medium of the hatred and avarice of man and extend the sphere of his self-destruction from one end of the earth to the other. It is for this reason that perversion of the nature of some particular individual or group in the name of the community or religion incites man's will to evil far more than scientific mistakes or conflicts of material interest. The communal god thus becomes the receptacle of hatred, vanity, snobbishness and stupidity. Insulted Godhead degrades man and keeps him in constant fear of his own fellows. This calamity strikes at the very root of power and fortune in our country.

There are instances of this in other countries as well. The traditional Christians express their contempt for the degradation and cruelty in the characters of the traditional gods and modes of worship of some Indian communities. On account of habit they cannot however see that their own conception of God is equally possessed by the evil genius of man. The community whose sacred books condemn to eternal hell a child that has died before its baptism, has attributed to God a degree of cruelty that is perhaps

unparalleled anywhere else. In fact, the conception of eternal hell, for any sin however heinous, is the most potent invention of human cruelty. Herein lies the explanation of the anti-scientific and anti-religious persecution practised in mediaeval Europe in order to preserve intact the faith in scriptural religion. Even today that conception of hell pervades with horror the prisons of civilized man, where there is no principle of reformation, but only the ferocity of punishment.

It is with the development of humanity that the realization of God gradually grows free of prejudice, at any rate, it ought to be so. The reason that it is not always so is due to the fact that we take anything and everything connected with religion to be eternal. It does not follow from our reverence for the eternal ideal of religion, that we must accept any particular religious dogma as also eternal. If we were fanatically to assert that every scientific opinion is eternally true, because there is eternal truth as the foundation of physical science, then we should have to assert, even today, that the sun is revolving round the earth. It is this mistake we generally make with regard to religion. The community gives the name of religion to its own traditional opinion, and thus strikes at Religion itself. The conflict, the cruelty, the unreasoning and unintelligent superstition, which then emerge, are without parallel in any other sphere of human life.

Mistakes in science, or in our code of conduct, arise from our inability to comprehend the wholeness of truth. In spiritual life we realize the wholeness of our being when it is conscious of a centre in a great and eternal meaning.

The earth revolves round its own axis and yet it circles round the sun along its vast orbit. Whatever happens in human society also exhibits these two tendencies. On the one hand, the paraphernalia of wealth and power are accumulated through the urge of the individual ego, and yet on the other, under the inspiration of the Universal Man, men unite with one another in their activity and their joy and make sacrifices for one another's sake.

Some years ago there was a report published in the London *Times*, which I came to know through the *Nation* of America. The British air-force was destroying from the air a Mahsud village in Afghanistan. One of the bombing planes was damaged and came down. An Afghan girl led the airmen into a neighbouring cave, and to protect them, a Malik remained on guard at the entrance of the cave. Forty men with brandished knives rushed forward to attack them, but the Malik dissuaded them. All this time, bombs were dropping from above and people were crowding into take shelter in the cave. Some Maliks of the neighbourhood and a Mollah proposed to help the Britishers and some of the women offered to feed them. After some time they at last disguised the airmen as Mahsuds and brought them out to a safe place.

In this incident, we find the two aspects of human nature revealed in their extremest forms. In the bombing from aeroplanes we have an instance of the wonderful development of human power—the vast expanse of his mailed fist from earth to heaven. But to forgive and protect the enemy engaged in dealing death reveals another aspect of man. The natural instinct to kill enemies is the

prompting of man's animal nature; but he transcended it and uttered the strange command: Forgive your enemies.

Our scriptures lay down that at the time of battle a charioteer must not attack the man who is not in a chariot but on the ground. Nor must he kill one who is impotent, or a supplicant, nor one who is seated or has his hair untied, nor one who humbly offers to submit. Nor yet must he kill one who is asleep or unprotected, naked or unarmed, a spectator or a non-combatant, or engaged in fighting another. He must remember the teachings of virtue and refrain from killing one whose weapons are broken, one who is afflicted with sorrow, one who is wounded or frightened.

We have heard Man say 'Do not sin against those that sin against you'. Whether or not the individual conforms in his conduct to this law he does not laugh it away as the ravings of a lunatic. In human life, we only occasionally find conformity to this principle and generally we find its opposite. In other words, its truth is hardly seen in a mere count of heads, and yet its truth is acknowledged. Where lies the basis of the aspect of man which realizes it? Let us see what answers have been given by man to this question.

> यस्यात्मा विरत. पापात् कल्याणे च निवेशित. ।
> तेन सर्वमिदं बुद्धं प्रकृतिर्विकृतिश्च या ।।
>
> He whose spirit refrains from evil and attends to the good has comprehended the *sarvam*, the totality. He therefore knows what is natural to him and what is an aberration.

Man comprehends his nature only when he abstains from evil and works for the good of all. This means that only the great among men understand human nature. How do they know it?

With a transparent heart, they comprehend the totality. The true and the good are in the totality. It is when man refrains from the sin which belongs to his nature as limited by the ego that he knows his own spiritual wholeness— it is then that he understands his own nature. His nature does not concern the individual alone: it concerns Him of Whom the *Gita* says, पूरुष नृषु 'He is the humanity in Men'.

All that we have said so far about the good and evil is not from the point of view of the preservation of society. The code based on the solid foundation of praise and blame, which society promulgates through commands and percepts for its own preservation, gives but a secondary importance to the eternal principle of Truth: the preservation of the traditional society is its primary object. We are therefore told that it is harmful to introduce into society the Religion of Truth in all its purity. It is often said that there is a great deal of stupidity in the common man. To keep him away from evil, he must therefore, if need be, be kept engaged with delusions, frightened or comforted with false fears or hopes, in short, treated as eternally a child or a brute. It is with society as with religious communities. The opinions and customs prevalent at some previous time are loath to give up their rights even at a later age. In the insect-world, we find some harmless insects that adopt the disguise of

terrible ones and thus secure themselves. It is the same with social laws. They try to make themselves powerful and permanent by disguising themselves as eternal truths. On the one hand, they have the external show of piety, and on the other, the terrors of torture in the after-life, various strict and sometimes unjust means of social punishment, compelling blind conformity to needless conventions under the threat of a made-to-order Hell. The Andamans, the Devil Islands of France, and the Lipari Isles of Italy, are the symbols of this very attitude in the field of politics. The inner truth about them is that the pure law of Truth and man-made laws do not move with the same rhythm. Those who revere the True, the Good, the Human as the ultimate goals of man have throughout the ages fought against this attitude.

It is not the object of this lecture to estimate the value of the good as conformity to society or the State. I want to discuss the basis of man's acceptance of the Truth, to discuss wherein Truth lies. In the many fields of interest in society and the State, we find at every step contradiction of the Truth in daily conduct, and yet man has given to it the highest place in his self-knowledge, called it his *dharma* which means his ultimate nature. In spite of the many differences of opinion with regard to the ideal of the good that different countries, times and individuals have, all men have honoured the reality of the good. What I have discussed are the implications of this fact with regard to the nature of the Religion of Man. The conflict of 'It is' and 'It ought to be' has raged from the very beginnings of human history. In discussing the reason of this conflict, I have said that in the mind of man, there is, on the one hand, the Universal Man, and on the other, the animal man limited by his self-seeking. It is the attempts at harmonizing the two that reveal themselves in different forms according to different religious systems. Otherwise, only advantage and disadvantage, the pleasant and the unpleasant, could have prevailed in the law of life. There would have been no significance at all of sin and virtue, of good and evil.

The question has been asked about the truth, in the Universal Mind, of the pain and pleasure one feels in his individual mind. If we think about it, we find that the pleasure and pain within the limits of the ego are transformed at the borders of the spirit. The man who dedicates his life for Truth, for the sake of his country and for the good of man, who thinks of himself against a vast background of ideals, finds that personal happiness and misery have changed their meaning for him. Such a man gives up his happiness with ease, and by accepting pain, he transcends it. In the life of self-seeking, the burden of pleasure and pain is very great, but when man transcends his self-interest he feels the burden so light that his patience when faced with the bitterest suffering and his forgiveness in spite of the heaviest insults seems to us to be superhuman.

Discords become too evident when the tuning of the instrument is going on, but they are not a part of the music itself. Discords jar on us, and if they did not, we should not progress on our quest after harmony. That is why we

give the name *Rudra* or Terrible to the Infinite—He draws us towards freedom along the path of the pain of disharmony.

The *Upaniṣad* declares:

एषास्य परमागतिरेषास्य परमा सम्पत्
एषोऽस्य परमो लोक एषोऽस्य परम आनन्द. ।

Here we have the dualism of He and this, the individual man and the other One who is within him and beyond him. It is said that *He* is the ultimate aim of *this*, its richest possession, its final rest and supreme joy. In other words, it is in Him that *this* has its perfection.

He is not a mere abstraction. He is an immediate object of the most intimate awareness, just as much as the self which I call my own. When my devotion yearns after Him and in Him I find my joy, it is my self-consciousness that is enlarged, deepened and extended to the Truth beyond the limits of my narrow existence. It is *Eṣaḥ*, this great He who challenges man to strike after perfection through endeavours to struggle from the unreal to the real, from darkness towards the light, from death towards immortality.

This challenge never allowed man to stop anywhere; it made of him an eternal wayfarer. Tired and worn out, those who abandon the road and build themselves a permanent house have in fact built their own mausoleums. Animals have their lairs, but man has taken to the road. Those who are great among men are the road-builders and the path-finders. The lure of the call of the infinite the path-finders. The lure of the call of the infinite in him has brought man out on the way in quest of the unattained. Empires rose and fell by the roadside of his journey, riches were amassed and then lost beneath the dust. Man built many an image to give form to his desire and again smashed them to pieces, like childhood's toys when childhood is over. He tried again and again to construct the magic key and open with it nature's treasure-house and again he discarded them all and started anew to search out the secret path leading to its depths. Age follows age in human history, and man continues in his ceaseless search, not for the satisfaction of his material needs, but in order to strive with all his might for the revelation of the Universal Man in the world of men, to rescue his own inmost truth from the crude obstacles set up by himself. That is the Truth which is greater than all his accumulated wealth, greater than all his achievements, greater than all his traditional beliefs and knows no death nor decay. Man's mistakes and failures have been many, leaving their ruins on the way along which he came. The strain of his sorrow and suffering has been infinite, but they mark his strong perseverance to shatter the bonds of his imprisoned ideals. Who could have, even for a moment, endured all this struggle, if it did not have an eternal significance in an inspiration which ever urges him to realize a greater unity in wisdom and love with him who can lead his heart and mind into the truth of all things. Who among men can seek for comfort and where for him is rest? The only goal of human life is to offer freedom and be free, the freedom that guides it to be life

LECTURE III

'I AM HE'

IN THE *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upaniṣad there is a remarkable verse:

> अथ योऽन्यां देवताम् उपास्ते
> अन्योऽसौ अन्योऽहम् अस्मीति
> न स वेद, यथा प ुरेवं स देवतानाम् ।
>
> A person who worships God as exterior to himself does not know him, he is like an animal belonging to the gods.

The statement may rouse angry remonstrance. Should man then worship his own self? Is it possible to offer oneself in self-devotion? Then the whole process of worship becomes a mere magnification of the ego.

The truth is quite opposite. Glorification of ego is the prerogative even of the animals, but it is only man who can realize *Bhūmā*, immensity, within his own soul as detached from his ego. It is easy to place one's God outside and worship him through traditional ceremonies, observance of injunctions and taboos but the difficulty comes when we have to realize and acknowledge the divine man in our own thoughts and actions. Therefore is it said:

> नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्य. ।
>
> They who are weak cannot attain the truth of the Eternal Spirit.

> य आत्मा अपहतपाप्मा विजरो
> विमृत्युर्विशोकोऽविजिघत्सोऽपिपास.
> सत्यकाम. सत्यसंकल्प. सोऽन्वेष्टव्य. स विजिज्ञासितव्य: ।
>
> The great soul who is within me, who is beyond age and death and sorrow, beyond hunger and thirst, He who is true in thought and in action, Him we must seek, Him we must know.

This seeking and knowing him is not seeking and knowing outside oneself. It is knowing through becoming, receiving through being true within.

As man is essentially a spirit this principle of unity holds good in all departments of his life. He must identify himself with his family and then in his service to it there can be no indignity. The mother is spiritually one with her child, otherwise she would become a maidservant. When our government is not foreign to us, when it represents our own will, then we are saved from humiliation in our relation to it. And in our Indian philosophy we realize the dignity of man in our spiritual identification with God himself, for it is truth, and man is never पशुरेव देवतानाम्, 'like an animal belonging to the gods.' The true freedom is not in isolation, it is in the profound union which is perfect.

I have already said that the knowledge of things which man attains by overcoming personal idiosyncrasies and prejudices is called science. It is valuable, because it is acceptable to all men. Similarly, the self in man which

transcends his self-interest finds its infinite truth in union with All. Its actions are विश्वकर्मा, universal actions. The functions of the isolated self are a bondage, the functions of the universal self are unfettered. The Upaniṣad has said:

युक्तात्मान: सर्वमेवाविशन्ति

The individual souls united with the Supreme Soul enter everywhere.

And this is the freedom of spirit which we must attain.

The truth which has been acknowledged by our scriptures, known as 'I am He'—सोऽहं, sounds like a prodigious egoism but it is not so. It has not exaggerated the small self which is isolated but expressed the great soul which comprehends all. This word सोऽहं, carries assurance of the truth of a grand unity which waits to be realized and justified by the individual.

Man's passions come in between and divide the realization of सोऽहं, 'I am He,' into a duality, and our ego becomes disproportionately augmented. Therefore the *Upaniṣad* says मा गृध: 'Covet not.' Greed tempts the world-man and turns him into a worldly man. The enjoyment which is fit for human beings is an enjoyment which is shared with all, it is universal. It is expressed in man's art, his literature, it is manifested in his social doings, in the hospitality of his love. Therefore our scripture says अतिथिदेवो भव the guest is divine. Because into the house of the individual man comes the guest, the representative of the universal man, he extends the limits of the home towards the world. If this invitation is obstructed, then it is penury even for a royal household. In this hospitality lies the philosophy of सोऽहं, that is to say, I am in union with him who is mine and who is more than me. In our country there are some *sanyasis* who translate in their lives the philosophy of सोऽहं, into extreme inactivity and callousness. They torture the body in order to cross the boundaries of animal existence, they also discard the independent responsibility of man in their presumption to deny and transcend humanity. They give up the ego which is attached to materials, they also disregard the soul which is united with all souls. That which they call *Bhūmā* is not the *Īśa* of the *Upaniṣad* who dwells in the union of all, their *Bhūmā* is divorced from all others and therefore has no responsibilities of action. They do not recognize him is पौरुषं नृषु, who is humanity in man, who is *mahatma* and *viśvakarma*, in whom work is not fragmentary work but world-work.

Man was once a barbarian, he lived on the plane of the animal; his mind, his work, then, were confined within the limits of his bare physical existence. And then he was पशुरेव देवतानाम्, 'like an animal belonging to the gods'; he was in a servile manner afraid of his gods and tried to appease them with flattery and incantations; the divine in himself remained self-oblivious. When his mind was illumined his awakened consciousness journeyed along widening avenues of life, crossing the frontiers of individual life into the universal life of humanity. From my friend Kshtimohan's rich storehouse of medieval Indian poetry I have got these precious words of the seer Rajjab. He says—

सब सांच मिलै सो सांच है ना मिलै सो झूठ।
जन रज्जब सांच कही भावइ रिझिभि भावै रूठ।।

That which conforms to all truth is truth, that which does not conform is false, this is wisdom, says Rajjab, whether it angers or pleases you.

It is evident that Rajjab knew that the majority of men would be angry at his words. Their opinions and customs were at variance with universal truth, yet they could claim them to be true and lie enmeshed in coils of unreality; indeed the very consciousness of an inner disharmony roused their excitement to an aggressive pitch. Trying to refute truth by angry remonstrance is like trying to pierce the flame with a knife. The knife cannot kill truth, it can kill man himself. Yet standing before that fury one has to say.

सब सांच मिलै सो सांच है
ना मिलै सो झूठ।

That which conforms to all truth is truth, that which does not conform is false.

When one day a solitary scientist declared that the earth revolves round the sun, through his own intellect he revealed the mind of the Universal Man. On that day millions of people were bitterly angry at his words, by the terrorism of force they wanted to make him say that it is the sun itself which revolves round the earth. But however numerous those other people may have been, by denying truth they at once denounced their eternal humanity. On that day alone in the midst of fierce opponents the man of truth declared सोऽहं, 'I am He,' that is to say, my individual knowledge and that of the eternal man are one.

Even if many millions of men say that because of some special combination of certain stars and planets in the immeasurable distance of space some supernatural force is generated in the river of a particular province of this earth, and that by bathing in its waters sins of the bather along with those of his forefathers are washed away, then we must stand up and say—

सब सांच मिलै सो सांच है
ना मिलै सो झूठ।

With the universal mind of man this does not agree, therefore it is untrue.

But where it has been said अद्भिर्गात्राणि शुध्यन्ति मन: सत्येन शुध्यति 'by water the body only can be cleansed, the mind can be cleansed only with truth,' this conforms to the standard of the universal mind.

Similarly it has been said—

कृत्वा पापं हि सन्तप्य तस्मात् पापात् प्रमुच्यते
नैवं कुर्यां पुनरिति निवृत्त्या पूयते तु स:।

If one is penitent after having committed sin then through that penitence the sin is purified; by resolving never again to repeat the sin man can again be pure.

By saying this man acknowledges in his own mind the truth of the

universal mind of man, the God within us whom we know in our soul and who reveals to us our own truth.

One day the Brahmin Ramananda leaving his disciples went and embraced the *chandal* Nabha, the Mahomedan weaver Kabir, the sweeper Ruidas. The society of his day made Ramananda an out-caste. But he alone really rose to the highest caste, the caste of the universal man. On that day standing in the midst of the curses of his community, Ramananda alone had said सोऽहं 'I am He.' But that truth alone he had transgressed the limits of petty conventions and contempt which cruelly dividing man and man in the name of social stability strike at the roots of social morality.

One day Jesus Christ said सोऽहं—'I and my Father are one.' For, in the light of love and goodwill for all men, he crossed the boundary of his ego and realized himself as one with the supreme man.

Lord Buddha preached, 'Cherish towards the whole universe immeasurable *maitri* in a spirit devoid of distinctions of hatred, of enmity. While standing, sitting, walking, lying down till you are asleep, remain established in this spirit of *maitri*'—this is called ब्रह्मविहार।

Such great message can be given only to man, for deep in man lies the truth of सोऽहं, 'I am He.' The Buddha knew this in himself. That is why he has said that it is through immeasurable love that man reveals the immeasurable truth within himself.

The *Atharva Veda* says:

तस्मात् वै विद्वान् पुरुषमिद ब्रह्मेति मन्यते

He who is wise knows man to be greater than he appears to be.

ये पुरुषे ब्रह्म विदुस्ते विदु. परमेष्टिनम्

They, who know the Great in man know the Supreme Being himself.

It was because he realized the divine man in humanity, that Buddha could say:

माता यथा नियं पुत्त
आयुसा एकपुत्तमनुरक्खे
एवमपि सब्बभूतेसु
मानसभावये अपरिमाणं

Cultivate the spirit of immeasurable love within you even as the love the mother feels for her one child.

We should not by counting the number of heads try to find out how many men can actually follow this advice. In such computation does not lie the test of truth.

He who realized man's infinitude within himself never had to wait for statistical assurance. Without hesitation he demanded that man may reveal through immeasurable love the divine within himself. By giving this message with perfect faith to all men he offered his true reverence for humanity.

I have already referred to the saying of the *Atharva Veda* that man is spiritually much more than his apparent self, he lives in his infinite surplus. In that surplus is all that is supreme in man, his ऋतं, righteousness, his सत्यं, his truth.

The atmosphere around the earth far transcends its mass in extension. Through that invisible atmosphere comes its light, its colour, flows its life. In this atmosphere gathers its cloud, showers its rain, through its influence the eternal mystery of beauty reveals itself on earth in ever-varied form. From this atmosphere comes that which is most glorious on earth, its loveliness, its life itself. Through the open window of this atmosphere comes every night crossing regions of darkness the message of radiant kinship from the starry Universe. This atmosphere can be described as the surplus, the soul of the earth, just as the complete man has been described as 'त्रिपादस्यामृतं'—in one part he is apparent, in the other three he is infinite. It is because this intangible atmosphere is so intimately an extension of the earth itself that exuberant wealth of life manifests itself on the very dust, a wealth which is immeasurably more precious than the dust itself.

The *Upaniṣad* says that when we know united in a completeness असम्भूति, the unmanifested infinite, and सम्भूति, the manifested finite, we know truth, in a reconciliation of the duality. He who is infinite in man must be expressed in the finitude of human life, of human society. Man must translate this idea in his action. So *Īśa Upaniṣad* says, 'You have to live a hundred years, you must act.' Fulfil your hundred years of life by work, such work as can truly be claimed through belief and result to express the truth of सोऽहं 'I am He.' Not by turning up one's eye-balls and sitting with closed breath and staying far away from man do we gain this Truth.

This work, this toil is not for earning livelihood. In which truth then is the source of its constant energy? What is it that gives man this strength to sacrifice his life, to embrace suffering, to defy ruthless power without material safeguard, to endure without submitting the constant torture of injustice and cruelty with such amazing fortitude? The reason is man has within himself not only life but immensity. From Kshitimohan's priceless collection we get this message of the Baūls जीवेजीवे चाइया देखि सब इ ये तार अवतार 'When I see through men I find in them the divine incarnation.' Innumerable men in knowledge, in love, in self-giving, in various forms and ways are revealing the immeasurable within them. History does not record their names; from their individual lives they pour into the living stream of humanity the immortal energy of Him—

यश्चायमस्मिन् तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः सर्व्वानुभू.

Who is the immortal Purusha of in-exhaustible light dwelling within our soul, who comprehends the All.

If through the plants the universal energy were not converted into the stuff of life then this living world would have been converted into a desert. Similarly if with or without our knowing men and women had not through the centuries, in different lands, transformed their indwelling, immeasurable

energy of the Supreme Man into love and knowledge, work and welfare to be absorbed endlessly into the living texture of human society, their society, being devoid of the truth of सोऽहं 'I am He,' would have been reduced to that status of the animal world. Not only so, by being severed from its own truth, society would not at all be able to live. Physicians tell us that by infusion of animal-blood into human body we do not increase its life but cause death. Herds of animals can live for ever according to animal laws, but human society cannot live at all like animals. It may be said in contradiction that many brute-like men seem to thrive very well indeed in human society. Boils on the skin also thrive on the body, their growth is indeed more vigorous than the rest of their surroundings. If the power of health in the body does not transcend the boil, then it hurts and in killing the boil kills itself. Society in its normal stage can endure many sins but when its degeneration becomes emphatic, then by absorbing animal blood in its thought, behaviour, literature and art, human society seals its own death.

The greatness born of a vast surplus about which *the Atharva Veda* has spoken is not in any particular kind of fulfilment. The greatness comprehends all the efforts of humanity, all the bravery, grace and strength of man. Perhaps there is a deep self-forgetful joy in the ascetic when he succeeds in concentrating the various powers of his mind on one immovable point of his consciousness. But ततः किम्, 'what then'? So long as there is any suffering and insult in humanity, no individual man can ever win his escape. Great men who have desired the freedom of humanity, have therefore told us सम्भवामि युगे युगे. From age to age indeed are they born in different lands. Today this very moment they are being born, tomorrow also we will see their birth. The stream of that birth flows through history, bearing this message सोऽहं. सोऽहं is the *mantram* of the united evolution of Man, not of one particular individual.

In the midst of the vast nebulae where new worlds are being fashioned appears from time to time a star; it clearly indicates the creative ferment of the vast fires which stir in the heart of the nebulae. Similarly in the firmament of history now and again we see manifestations of the Supreme Man. From them we understand that in the heart of all men is constantly working the urge of evolution. Man in human society is all the while striving to realize himself in the world-man by breaking through the shell of his ego. In fact, it is in this process that the whole cosmic universe seeks its own truth, the supreme truth of the ever growing, ever-becoming Humanity. After billions of years since the beginning of the world first appeared man. Some scholars are overwhelmed by the mathematics of number and comparing the massiveness of time and space to the smallness of man indulge in the luxury of our humiliation. But it is a mere illusion to consider quantity to be greater than Truth which cannot be measured at all by quantity. That which we call matter or unrevealed life, lay slumbering for unnumbered Ages. But when one day a single cell of life appeared on this earth the whole evolution of the universe reached a great meaning. Amidst the externality of matter appeared the truth which is internal. For life is internal, organic. Who can despise the speck of life because

it has been born recently after aeons time and because in comparison to the mass of matter it seems to be small? Man first realized the truth of infinite life when from the heart of the dumb matter comes the Great voice of life, यदिदं किञ्च सर्व्वं प्राण एजति निःसृतम् 'From life is born all-that-is and trembles in the vibrating life.' Matter we know as a fact because it is external to us; but life we know as truth from within ourselves. The expression of life is internal, the whole of it is pure movement. Therefore the language of movement is immediately real to us, it is the language of our life. The reality of this endless movement we have known as truth in relation to our own inner self. The urge of incessant movement we may call heat or electricity or something else; yet all these are mere words. If we say that in this movement there is life, then we indicate something which has meaning in our immediate experience. At the same time we realize that this life of mine which is moving is also comprehended in the larger movement of Universal Life. That the urge of life's movement is nowhere else in the universe excepting, accidently, only in living beings, is a statement which our mind cannot accept because our mind can offer its homage to truth only in its background of wholeness.

The *Upaniṣad* says:

कोह्येवान्यात् कः प्राण्यात् यदेष आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात्

With what assurance would a single insect desire for life if the joy of life did not pervade the whole of the infinite space? How can the flame burn for a single moment on the tip of the match-stick if the whole sky did not sustain its truth of ignition? Within life we find an inner meaning of the entire creation—that meaning we call Will. Matter remained dumb—it could not express the language of will,—Life came and expressed its will. That message which was implicit so long found at last its voice.

The student after much effort and time first learns the alphabet, then the spelling, then the grammar; he wastes paper and ink scribbling incomplete and meaningless sentences, he uses and discards much acquisition of materials; at last when as a poet he is able to write his first utterance, that very moment in that composition all his inexpressive accumulations of words first find their glimmer of a significance. In the great evolution of the Universe we have found its first significance in a cell of life, then in an animal, then in Man. From the outer universe gradually we come to the inner realm and one by one the gates of freedom are unbarred. When the screen is lifted on the appearance of Man on earth we realize the great and mysterious truth of relatedness, of the supreme unity of all that is. Only can Man declare that those who know Truth can enter into the heart of the All—Only man can open our heart with this aspiration.

सव्वे सत्ता सुखिता होन्तु अवेरा होन्तु
अब्यापज्झो होन्तु सुखी अत्तानं परिहरन्तु।
सव्वे सत्ता दुक्खा पमुञ्चन्तु। सव्वे सत्ता मा
यथालद्धसम्पत्तितो विगच्छन्तु–

> May all beings be happy, may they have no enemies, may they be indestructible, may they spend time in joyousness. May all living beings be free from suffering and not be denied of their dues.

We can only pray, let sorrow come if it has to come, let there be death, let there be loss, but let Man declare across all space and time 'I am He.'

Letters to a Friend

PREFACE

THE LETTERS contained in this volume were written to me by Rabindranath Tagore during the years 1913–1922. Many of them were published in India, in the *Modern Review*, and also in book form, under the title *Letters from Abroad*. The present volume represents an entire revision and enlargement of that book, of which only a few copies reached England. The material has now been divided into chapters, with a brief explanatory summary of the circumstances in which the letters were written.

It is a pleasure to me to thank Mr Ramananda Chatterjee, editor of the *Modern Review*, and Mr S. Ganesan, publisher, Madras, for permission to use the letters included in this volume, which have already appeared in India. I would also thank Messrs Macmillan for leave to quote in full the poem on page 52, and Mr Kelk for his kind help in proof correction.

With the Poet's sanction, this volume has been dedicated to the memory of my own dear friend and fellow-worker at Santiniketan, William Winstanley Pearson. He accompanied me on journeys undertaken with Rabindranath Tagore in different parts of the world, and also was my companion when I travelled with him alone to South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. He was with the Poet in Europe and America at the time when many of these letters were written, and is often referred to in them. His death, owing to a railway accident in Italy in 1923—just when he was at the height of his powers of service and love—has made the fellowship between East and West, for which Santiniketan stands, doubly sacred to us all. He had two homes, one in Manchester and one at Santiniketan, both of them very dear to him. In each his memory is still fresh after the lapse of years.

Any profit from this book will be devoted to the Pearson Memorial Hospital at Santiniketan, which is open to our neighbours, the Santal aboriginals, as well as to the members of the Asram. Willie Pearson's great joy at Santiniketan was to visit these Santal villagers along with the boys of the Asram. He built a school and a well for them and did other acts of service. There could be no more suitable way of preserving his memory than such a hospital.

In conclusion, my special thanks are due to Muirhead Bone and Mukul Dey for their kindness in allowing me to use their drypoint etchings, and to William Rothenstein for the facsimile of the Poet's handwriting. They all shared with me the freindship of Willie Pearson, to whose memory this book is dedicated.

October 1928 C. F. Andrews

AN ESSAY ON THE BENGAL RENAISSANCE

I

THE COURSE TAKEN by the Bengal Renaissance a hundred years ago was strangely similar to that of Western Europe in the sixteenth century. The result in the history of mankind is likely to be in certain respects the same also. For just as Europe awoke to new life then, so Asia is awakening to-day.

In Europe it was the shock of the Arab civilization and the Faith of Islam which startled the West out of the intellectual torpor of the Dark Ages. Then followed the recovery of the Greek and Latin Classics and a new interpretation of the Christian Scriptures, both of which, acting together, brought the full Reformation and Renaissance.

In Bengal it was the shock of the Western civilization that startled the East into new life and helped forward its wonderful rebirth. Then followed the revival of the Sanskrit Classics and a reformation from within of the old religions. These two forces, acting together, made the Bengal Renaissance a living power in Asia. In Bengal itself the literary and artistic movement came into greatest prominence. Rabindranath Tagore has been its crown.

II

Early in the nineteenth century the burning question in Bengal was whether the spread of the English language should be encouraged or not. Macaulay's famous minute, written in 1835, fixed the English tongue as the medium for higher education. "Never on earth," writes Sir John Seeley, "was a more momentous question discussed." The phrase is an arresting one, and appears a palpable exaggeration until we understand the issues involved, not only for Bengal, but for every country in the East.

Macaulay won the victory. Nevertheless, some of his premises were unsound and his conclusions inaccurate. He poured contempt on the Sanskrit Classics; he treated Bengali literature as useless. In expressing these opinions he committed egregious blunders. Yet, strangely enough, in spite of his narrow outlook, his practical insight was not immediately at fault. The hour for the indigenous revival had not yet come. A full shock from without was needed, and the study of English gave the shock required.

But the new life which first appeared was not altogether healthy. It led immediately to a shaking of old customs and an unsettlement of religious convictions, carried often to a violent and unthinking extreme. The greatest disturbance of all was in the social sphere. A wholesale imitation of purely Western habits led to a painful confusion of ideas. It was a brilliant and precocious age, bubbling over with a new vitality; but wayward and unregulated, like a rudderless ship on a stormy sea.

III

The one outstanding personality, whose presence saved Bengal at this crisis, was the great Raja Ram Mohun Roy. Towering above his contemporaries, solitary and majestic, this extraordinary genius seems to have measured accurately the force of every new current as it flowed quickly past, and to have steered his own course with an almost unerring precision. As practical as Macaulay, he was no mere opportunist. He was a true prophet, and had the prophet's sacred fire of enthusiasm. On the literary side he was one of the most ardent promoters of the new Western learning, and eagerly helped forward Maculay's programme. But the best energies of his marvelously full life were directed to re-create in the heart of the Bengali people that true reverence for the Indian past which should lead to a revival of their own Sanskrit Classics. Above all, he did not despise his Bengali mother-tongue, but brought it back into full literary use.

IV

Debendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath, was the next outstanding figure in the Bengali literary revival. His work and influence lasted for more than half a century. If Ram Mohun Roy may be likened to the root of this tree of literature, planted deep in the soil, Debendranath Tagore may be compared to its strong and vigorous stem, and Rabindranath, his son, to its flower and fruit. Rarely in the history of literature can such a direct succession be traced.

Debendranath's religious character illuminated the age with a moral grandeur of its own. So impressive was his spiritual authority, that he received by universal consent the name of Maharshi, or great saint. During the flood-tide of English fashion he held fast to the ancient moorings and strengthened every bond which kept his country close to its own historic past.

His autobiography, translated by his son, reveals the deep religious spirit of modern Bengal, along with its passion for intellectual truth. The Tagore family had already been attracted within the orbit of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, and the vivid memory of the great reformer was one of the strongest influences in moulding the life of Debendranath as he grew up from boyhood to youth.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, owing to these initial movements, a creative period in Bengali literary history had set in. It represented not merely an awakening of Bengal, but the beginning of a new era for the whole of Asia.

V

This Bengal Renaissance bears on its surface the marks of conflict between the new Western learning and the revived Sanskrit Classics. Toru Dutt, the fairest and frailest flower among the writers, composed her songs only in English; but the fragrance of the Sanskrit past pervades all her works and makes them a national possession. Michael Dutt began by writing English verse; but he abandoned this, while his literary powers were still at their height, and composed his later poems in a wonderfully sonorous and majestic Bengali metre. He has been called the Milton of the Bengal revival. Bankim's novels

carry back the mind at every turn to the romance writers in the West. We can almost feel behind them the zest with which young Bengal explored their new-found treasures.

But the strength of the period consisted in this, that the writers, amid all their passionate and devoted study of English, remained true to the ancient Indian ideal. They remembered the rock from whence they were hewn. They did not despise their own birthright. Not only the language, but also the subjects, of this new literature were brought more in touch with the people. The village life of Bengal, which had tended to fall into the background, gained a new appreciation. The mediaeval as well as the classical times were laid under contribution for subject-matter. The commanding ideal at last rose up before the minds of men, to build a truly national literature and art out of the living stones of indigenous poetry, music and song.

VI

Into this rich heritage of the past the young poet Rabindranath entered, and he has done more than anyone else to make this ideal a living inspiration in Bengal. A friend of mine has described to me the scene that took place when the aged novelist Bankim was being honoured and garlanded. The old man took the garland from off his own neck and placed it on that of a young writer who was seated at his feet—Rabindranath Tagore.

This act of Bankim has now been universally recognized as both generous and just. That which others were struggling to attain, in the midst of insuperable difficulties, Rabindranath has reached with the quick leap and joyful ease of supreme genius. The ideals of art, which were before only dimly discerned, he has seen with open vision. Moreover, in his later works he has carried still further the spiritual mission of his father, and he has clothed his own deepest religious thoughts with a raiment of simplicity and beauty.

His fame has come to the full in recent years, and his poetry has taken on a more prophetic tone. He has passed forward from the subjective period of unbounded delight in Nature, to enter into the mystery of the vast sorrow of the world; to share the heavy burden of the poor; to face death itself unmoved; to look for and attain the unclouded vision of God.

VII

In all this, Rabindranath has remained close to the heart of Bengal. Every day that I was with him, in 1912, his eyes seemed to be straining across the sea, to greet his boys at Santiniketan—longing also to be back among his village people at Shileida, among whom he was a father and a friend.

It is not wonderful, therefore, that Bengal, from whose soil he seems to draw his deepest inspiration, should have been inspired in turn by his music and song with a high consciousness of its own destiny. He has given vital expression, at a supreme moment of history, to the rising hopes of his own people. In that country of music and art and song,

> The prophetic soul of the wide world
> Dreaming of things to come

has found at last its vision in and through his poems. The dreams which Bengal is now dreaming may not all come true.

> The tumult and the shouting dies:
> The captains and the kings depart,

in the pageant of literature as well as that of empire. But song and music are mighty instruments, when the spirit of a rising people is beating high with hope; and to-day men, women, and even little children, are seeing through the eyes of Rabindranath the vision of "Golden Bengal."

That gracious vision is radiant and luminous. And there is not unmixed with it a sacred sense of awe, that God has visited His people.

If this supreme power of music and literature to create a new spirit in a whole people seems somewhat unreal in the West, it must be remembered that India still retains, deep below the surface, her living faith in the Unseen.

AN ESSAY ON THE PERSONALITY OF TAGORE

I

THE TEMPERAMENT and character of Rabindranath Tagore may best be understood if I attempt to describe one memorable day in London, when he told me in outline the story of his own life in relation to his literary career.

He was lodging in the upper room of a house just outside the entrance to South Kensington Underground Station. The time was a morning in September 1912, and a thick London fog filled the air. He was still weak on account of a very serious illness, which had brought him to the West to undergo an operation, and his face looked pale and worn.

He first told me about his father—how all the household became still and hushed when he was present in the house, as if anxious not to disturb his meditations.

He spoke to me, also, about his mother, who had died when he was quite young. As he saw her face for the last time on earth, calm and beautiful in death, it awakened in him no childish terror, nor even wonder; all seemed so peaceful and natural. It was only later, as he grew older, that he learnt Death's inner meaning.

The account he gave me of his own life in early childhood was as follows:—

I was very lonely—that was the chief feature of my childhood—I was very lonely. I saw my father seldom: he was away a great deal, but his presence pervaded the whole house and was one of the deepest influences on my life. I was kept in the charge of servants of the household after my mother died, and I used to sit, day after day, in front of the window and picture to myself what was going on in the outer world.

From the very first time that I can remember, I was passionately fond of Nature. Oh! it used to make me mad with joy when I saw the clouds come up in the sky one by one. I felt, even in those early days, that I was surrounded with a companionship very intense and very intimate, though I did not know how to name it. I had such an exceeding love for Nature, that I cannot think in what way to describe it to you; but she was a kind of loving companion, always with me, and always revealing to me some fresh beauty.

This was how he pictured his childhood to me on that foggy day in London, and a passage in his *Reminiscences* makes the portrait still more vivid:—

In the morning of autumn (he writes) I would run into the garden the moment I got up from sleep. A scent of leaves and grass, wet with dew, seemed to embrace me, and the dawn, all tender and fresh with the newly awakened rays of the sun, held out its face to me to greet me beneath the trembling vesture of palm-leaves. Nature shut her hands and laughingly asked every day: "What have I got inside?" and nothing seemed impossible.

II

Rabindranath Tagore went on to tell me that his first literary awakening came from reading the old Bengali poets, Chandidas and Vidyapati. He studied them in a recently published edition, when he was twelve or thirteen, and revelled in their beauty. He went still further, and, with the precocity of youth, imitated their style and published some poems under the name of Bhanu Sinha. Literary Bengal wondered for a time who this Bhanu Sinha could be. He laughed as he told me of this exploit of his boyhood, and went on to say that these and many other juvenile poems were merely conventional and imitative. They followed the old classical style.

When he wrote, however, the poems published later under the name of *Sandhya Sangit* (Evening Songs), he broke away from the classical style altogether and became purely romantic. At first he was derided by the older generation for his new metres; but the younger generation was with him. He chose no English model; the early Vaishnava religious literature was the source of his inspiration. These religious poems ever afterwards remained intimately endeared to him. Their influence is marked in his own lyrics, and especially in the *Gitanjali* series.

III

The time of his real birth as a poet he dates from a morning in Free School Lane, Calcutta, when with dramatic suddenness the veil seemed to be withdrawn from his eyes and he saw the inner soul of reality.

It was morning (he said to me). I was watching the sunrise from Free School Lane. A veil was suddenly withdrawn and everything became luminous. The whole scene was one perfect music—one marvellous rhythm. The houses in the street, the men moving below, the little children playing, all seemed parts of one luminous whole—inexpressibly glorious. The vision went on for seven or eight days. Everyone, even those who bored me, seemed to lose their outer barrier of personality; and I was full of gladness, full of love, for every person and every tiniest thing. Then I went to the Himalayas, and looked for it there, and I lost it.... That morning in Free School Lane was one of the first things which gave me the inner vision, and I have tried to explain it in my poems. I have felt, ever since, that this was my goal: to express the fullness of life, in its beauty, as perfection—if only the veil were withdrawn.

I copied this account down as the Poet told it on that dark, misty London morning; and I can remember distinctly even now the quiet laugh he gave as he said, "And I lost it," and also the emphasis he laid upon the words "fullness of life." In Rabindranath's own prose writings the same incident is also recorded. It may be well to compare this other record with the picture he gave me in London. They corroborate and explain one another.

Where the Sadar Street ends, trees in the garden of Free School Street are visible. One morning I was standing in the verandah, looking at them. The sun was slowly rising above the screen of their leaves; and as I was watching it, suddenly, in a moment, a veil seemed to be lifted from my eyes. I found the

world wrapt in an inexpressible glory with its waves of joy and beauty bursting and breaking on all sides. The thick shroud of sorrow that lay on my heart in many folds was pierced through and through by the light of the world, which was everywhere radiant.

That very day the poem known as *The Fountain Awakened from its Dream* flowed on like a fountain itself. When it was finished, still the curtain did not fall on that strange vision of beauty and joy. There was nothing and no one whom I did not love at that moment.... I stood on the verandah and watched the coolies as they tramped down the road. Their movements, their forms, their countenances seemed to be strangely wonderful to me, as if they were all moving like waves in the great ocean of the world. When one young man placed his hand upon the shoulder of another and passed laughingly by, it was a remarkable event too.... I seemed to witness, in the wholeness of my vision, the movements of the body of all humanity, and to feel the beat of the music and the rhythm of a mystic dance.

For some days I was in this ecstatic mood. My brothers had made up their minds to go to Darjeeling, and I accompanied them. I thought I might have a fuller vision of what I had witnessed in the crowded parts of the Sadar Street, if once I reached the heights of the Himalayas.

But when I reached the Himalayas the vision all departed. That was my mistake. I thought I could get at truth from the outside. But however lofty and imposing the Himalayas might be, they could not put anything real into my hands. But God, the Great Giver, Himself can open the whole Universe to our gaze in the narrow space of a single lane.

IV

The volume of lyrics called *Morning Songs* was the direct outcome of this time of ecstatic early vision. There is a romantic longing to know intimately the secret of the beauty of the world. But as yet he had not the deep-laid basis of practical experience whereon to build. His first lyrics, therefore, are mainly in the realm of imagination, and not closely related to common human experience.

But outer circumstances, as well as his own inner spirit, prevented the young writer from remaining too long in that enchanted garden of the soul. His father, seeing his son's remarkable genius, very wisely insisted that he should leave Calcutta and go down to the banks of the ganges in order to supervise there the family estate. This work brought him into closest touch with the village life of Bengal. He had to deal each day with the practical affairs of men, and to understand and appreciate the elemental hopes and fears of mankind, stripped of all convention. To his own good fortune, also, as a poet, his joy in communing with Nature found at the same time its fullest and freest expression. During pauses in his active business life he would live all alone on the sand-flats of the Ganges, moving up and down from village to village in his boat.

Sometimes (he told me) I would pass many months absolutely alone

without speaking, till my own voice grew thin and weak through lack of use. I used to write from my boat the stories of the village life which I had witnessed in the course of my work, and put into written words the incidents and conversations which I had heard. This was my "short-story" period; and some think these stories better than the lyrics which I had written before.

It was during this long residence at Shileida that the deepest love for Bengal, his motherland, developed. The national movement had not yet come into actual outward shape and form; but the forces which were to break forth later were already acting powerfully in the hearts of leading Bengali thinkers; and Rabindranath's soul caught the flame of patriotism, not in Calcutta itself, but among the villagers. His unshaken faith in the destiny of his country received its strongest confirmation from what he saw in the village life of his own people. He was not unaware of the dangers which threatened that life through its contact with the new social forces from the West. Indeed, this forms the theme of many of his short stories. But he believed, with all his heart, from what he had witnessed, that the stock from which the new national life was to spring forth was sound at the core. He spoke to me, that morning, with the greatest possible warmth and affection of the Bengali villagers, and of the many lessons he owed to them of patience and simplicity, of human kindliness and sympathy.

V

Rabindranath Tagore dated the next stage in his literary life from the time when he went to Santiniketan Asram from Shileida.

He left his father's estate; and there seemed to come to him the strongest impression that a new period of adventure was about to arrive in his life. He anticipated some change, for which these quiet unbroken years in the country had been a preparation.

Slowly there came to him the clear call to give up his life more wholly for is country. He first went to Calcutta in order to found a school, and afterwards to Santiniketan with the same object. On his arrival at Santiniketan, to take up this new work, he was handicapped for want of funds. "I sold my books," he said to me pathetically.

I sold all my books, my copyrights, everything I had, in order to carry on the school. I cannot possibly tell you what a struggle it was, and what difficulties I had to go through. At first the object in view was purely patriotic, but later on it grew more spiritual. Then, in the very midst of all these outer difficulties and trials, there came the greatest change of all, the true *Varsha Sesha*,[1] the change in my own inner life.

He went on to tell me how, when he was forty years old, his wife had died, and almost immediately after his daughter showed signs of consumption. He left the school and went away with his daughter to nurse her and tend her, but after six months of mingled hope and fear she passed away from his arms and left his heart still more desolate. Then came the third overwhelming wave of sorrow. His youngest son, to whom he had learnt to be father and mother in

one, was taken suddenly ill with cholera and died in his presence—the child of his love.

As he spoke of these things that morning, the darkness of the London mists rolled away and the light shone through the clouds with a majestic radiance. This outward scene was but a faint symbol of the story that was being told me to quietly in that upper room.

The Poet spoke of the days and hours wherein Death itself became a loved companion—no longer the king of terrors, but altogether transformed into a cherished friend.

You know (he said to me), this death was a great *blessing* to me. I had through it all, day after day, a sense of fulfilment, of completion, as if nothing were lost. I felt that if even an atom in the universe seemed lost, it could never actually perish. It was not mere resignation that came to me, but the sense of a fuller life. I knew then, at last, what Death was. It was perfection.

Through what depth of suffering that peace and joy came out at last triumphant, the lines in his face told me as he spoke these words.

VI

It was during this period that *Gitanjali* was written in his own mother-tongue, Bengali. "I wrote," he said, "those poems for myself. I did not think of publishing them when I was writing."

They mark the great transition in his life, when the Poet's social and national longings became wholly merged in the universal. He has attempted—to use his own words—"to express the fullness of human life, in its beauty, as perfection."

Since that period of sorrow he has fared forth as a voyager, a pilgrim. This is the last phase of all. It was his own health which first compelled him to set out to the West. But here again, as in the former period mentioned, the outward circumstance has brought with it a new spiritual development.

As I crossed the Atlantic (he wrote to me), and spent on board ship the beginning of a new year, I realized that a new stage in my life had come, the stage of a voyager. To the open road! To the emancipation of self! To the realization in love!

In another letter, which he wrote earlier to me, dealing with the meeting of the conflicting races of the world and the removal of colour prejudice, he uses these words:—

This meeting of the races affords the greatest of all problems that men have ever been asked to solve. It is, I believe, the one question of the present age, and we must be prepared to go through the martyrdom of suffering and humiliation till the victory of God in man is achieved.

Since *Gitanjali* was written, Rabindranath Tagore has been facing, day by day, these larger international questions and casting aside altogether that narrower nationalism which for one period in his life had affected his own songs. He has attempted, also, to comprehend the inner harmony of his own life's work and to read its deeper meaning. The stage of philosophy has been

reached by the Poet. Yet his lyrical powers seem in no way to be diminished. The fountain of song is still sending forth new streams.

VII

When Rabindranath Tagore first landed in London, in 1912, he had placed before his English friends some translations of his Bengali poems. He had offered them with singular diffidence, without at all realizing the value of his great achievement. "I found," he said, "that I had to strip my Bengali verses of all their gaudy ornaments and to clothe them in the simplest English dress."

That English setting has since been acknowledged, by those who are best able to judge, to represent a beautiful and musical prose—a comparatively new form of English, which has enriched the literature of Great Britain. The triumph has been won—a triumph hardly ever before achieved in literary history—of an author translating his own poems into a wholly new language, thus giving his message to two peoples at once in a noble literary form.

This crowning success of Rabindranath Tagore has already brought East and West closer together in a common fellowship and understanding. Where the forces of racial rivalry and religious division are so strong, it is indeed no small blessing to humanity when a generous voice can be clearly heard, above the discordant tumult of the times, which the whole world welcomes as a messenger and revealer of peace and goodwill to mankind.

CHAPTER I

THE LETTERS contained in this opening chapter were written to me by the poet Rabindranath Tagore in the early years when my work as teacher at Santiniketan had only just begun. He came back from Europe in September 1913, but I was not able to join him then on account of an attack of malarial fever. Later on it was necessary for me to go out to South Africa along with my friend W.W. Pearson in order to take part in the Passive Resistance struggle which was being carried on against the evils of the indenture system of Indian labour. We both returned to India in April 1914, and were with the Poet until we went out to Fiji together in September 1915.

Some explanation must be given concerning the special series of letters which the Poet sent me each day from Ramgarh, near Naini Tal, in the latter part of May 1914.

He had gone in good health to the Hills in order to spend there his summer holidays; but he told me afterwards that the mental pain he experienced soon after his arrival was almost equivalent to a death-agony. He had hardly expected to survive it. This was all the more strange because it came upon him quite suddenly at a moment when he was feeling a sense of physical exhilaration in the supreme beauty of the Himalayas and also the delight of the change from the intense heat of the plains. I remember him saying to me that the shock of agony overtook him like a thunderstorm out of a clear, unclouded sky.

This suffering, which is referred to in the letters written in May, entirely passed away. The Poet was in the best of health and spirits all through the month of June, renewing his own full, active work in his schools among his boys after the holidays were over. Indeed, I can remember June 1914 as a singularly happy month.

But early in July the darkness again came down upon his life and seemed once more to overwhelm him. It appeared to have no external source, either in bad health or bad climate; and the school work was progressing wonderfully. But he spoke to me constantly of the mysterious and unbearable weight of mental oppression which drove him into solitude. He went away from the school and lived alone at Surul. For nearly three months this depression continued. There are hardly any letters written during this period; but I have the most vivid and painful recollections of his suffering.

Long before any news reached us about the World War that was impending, and before any hint of it had come to us in the midst of our comparative retirement from the world at Santiniketan, his mind was entirely preoccupied with the foreboding of some disaster which was about to overwhelm humanity. He wrote at this time, and published some weeks before the war began, a very remarkable Bengali poem called *The Destroyer*, in which he spoke of the sudden destruction that was coming upon the earth. It contained the following lines:

Is it the Destroyer who comes?
For the boisterous sea of tears heaves in the flood-tide of pain.
The crimson clouds run wild in the wind, lashed by lightning, and the thundering laughter of the Mad is over the sky.
Life sits in the chariot crowned by Death.
Bring out your tribute to him of all that you have.

Looking back now on that period, when humanity was suddenly torn in pieces by internecine war, it seems certain to me that the Poet's highly sensitive nature had made him feel dimly beforehand the tragedy which was about to happen. In no other way can I account for his intense mental suffering.

LONDON, *August 16th, 1913*

I am so glad to know that you are now in Santiniketan. It is impossible to describe to you my longing to join you there.

The time has come at last when I must leave England; for I find that my work here in the West is getting the better of me. It is taking up too much of my attention and assuming more importance than it actually possesses. Therefore I must, without delay, go back to that obscurity where all living seeds find their true soil for germination.

This morning I am going to take a motor-ride to Rothenstein's country house, and if I delay any longer I may not have time to write to my other correspondents by this mail, so I must close this letter.

CALCUTTA, *October 11th, 1913*

I have gone through a period of difficulty. My life had appeared to me lonely and burdened with responsibilities too heavy for a single man to bear. Evidently my mind has got into a habit of leaning too much upon my friends whom I had acquired in England, and letting most of its current flow outward. Therefore, coming to my own country, where the contact of humanity is not so close as in the West, I felt suddenly stranded and in a desolation, wherein every individual has to struggle through his own problem unaided. For some length of time, solitariness weighed upon my heart like a heavy load, till I gained my former mental adjustment and felt again the current turn inward from the world outside. Now I feel the flood-tide of life and companionship. It sweeps the burden from off my shoulders and carries me along with it on its joyous course.

In India the range of our lives is narrow and discontinuous. This is the reason why our minds are often beset with provincialism. In our Asram at Santiniketan we must have the widest possible outlook for our boys, and universal human interests. This must come spontaneously—not merely through the reading of books, but through dealings with the wider world.

SANTINIKETAN, *October 11th, 1913*

You must certainly rid your system of this malarial poison before you take up your regular work at Santiniketan.

Is it wholly impossible for you to come down here at once, and stay with us quietly and indulge in absolute rest for some time? Jagadananda had a very bad type of malaria before he joined his work here. His coming to Bolpur has been the saving of his life. Do give our Asram a trial. She will nurse you back to health. Your room shall be fitted with a desk and writing materials and other necessaries. You can start a little gardening in our school grounds and take occasional excursions into our *Sal* grove. Possibly, giving me a Greek lesson now and then will not fatigue you too much, if you feel so inclined.

Just now the singing mood is upon me, and I am turning out fresh songs every day.

SANTINIKETAN, *February 1914*

[*Written to meet me in England after my return from South Africa*]

I send you my love and the translation of a song of mine written about two months ago. We are waiting for you, knowing that you are coming to us with your heart filled with the wisdom of death and the tender strength of sorrow.[1] You know our best love was with you, while you were fighting our cause in South Africa along with Mr Gandhi and others.

My days of turmoil are not yet over. Indeed, I have not yet been able to settle down to my work and to my rest. Interruptions come almost daily to me in various forms. At last I have made up my mind to be rude, and to leave all invitations ignored and letters unanswered.

The mango blossoms have appeared in our Asram. The air is full of music, heard and unheard, and I do not know why we should be callous to the call of the seasons and foolishly behave as if the Spring and the Winter are the same to human beings, with the same round of works to follow, without having the option to be occasionally useless and absurd. However, I am in that mood when one forgets that he has any other obligations to meet than to be good for nothing and glad.

SANTINIKETAN, *March 5th, 1914*

Lately I have been spending some days alone in the solitude of Shileida; for I needed it very greatly, and it has done me good. I feel that I must protect myself from all distractions for some time, so as to be able to add to my inner resources, never considering it a duty to force myself to work merely with the vain intention of doing good, but rather making the work I do living and real.

To try to benefit others, and yet not to have enough of oneself to give others, is a poor affair.

SANTINIKETAN, *May 10th, 1914*

When are you coming to stay with me in the Hills? I am afraid you are passing through a great deal of worry, and you are in need of a good rest. I won't let you work during this vacation. We must have no particular plans for our holidays. Let us agree to waste them utterly, until laziness proves to be a burden to us. Just for a month or so we can afford to be no longer useful members of society. The cultivation of usefulness produces an enormous

amount of failure, simply because in our avidity we sow seeds too closely.

RAMGARH, *May 14th, 1914*

Here I feel that I have come to the place that I needed most in all the world. I hated to be disloyal to the plains of Bengal, where the earth lies so meek and unobtrusive, leaving the sky to the undisputed dominion of all the horizons. But happily the poet's heart is inconstant; it is easily won; and to-day I am already bending my knees to Father Himalaya asking pardon for keeping aloof for so long in blind distrust.

The hills all round seem to me like an emerald vessel brimming over with peace and sunshine. The solitude is like a flower spreading its petals of beauty and keeping its honey of wisdom at the core of its heart. My life is full. It is no longer broken and fragmentary.

RAMGARH, *May 15th, 1914*

At last I am supremely happy, not simply because the quiet of this place affords me the needful change from the worries of a crowded life, but because it supplies my mind with its natural food. Directly I come to a place like this I can realize at once that I had been living before on half-rations.

I have found myself since I came here, and I am filled with the wonder that the infinite Power and Joy has become what I am and what this blade of grass is. When we are restless we raise dust all about us and we forget the supreme truth that 'we are.' I cannot tell you the great joy of seeing everything through the sight which comes from within.

RAMGARH, *May 17th, 1914*

To-day is my father's birthday anniversary. We have just had our morning prayer, and my mind is full. It is a stormy morning, dark and threatening, with an occasional burst of pallid light. It seems like the symbol of a spiritual new birth. I have been experiencing the feeling of a great expectation, although it has also its elements of very great suffering. To be born naked in the heart of the eternal Truth; to be able to feel with my entire being the life-throb of the universal heart—that is the cry of my soul. I tell you all this, so that you may understand what I am passing through and may help me when the occasion arrives.

Do take care of yourself and get well, so as to be fit to fight your own battle with renewed strength and hope.

RAMGARH, *May 21st, 1914*

I am struggling on my way through the wilderness. The light from across the summit is clear; but the shadows are slanting and deep on the slope of the dark valley. My feet are bleeding, and I am toiling with panting breath. Wearied, I lie down upon the dust and cry and call upon His name.

I know that I must pass through death. God knows, it is the death-pang that is tearing open my heart. It is hard to part with the old self. One does not know, until the time comes, how far it had spread its roots, and into what

unexpected, unconscious depths it had sent its thirsty fibres draining out the precious juice of life.

But the Mother is relentless. She will tear out all the tangled untruths. We must not nourish in our being what is dead. For the dead is death-dealing. 'Through death lead us to deathlessness.' The toll of suffering has to be paid in full.

For we can never enter the realm of white light and pure love until all our debts are cleared and nothing binds us to the dead past. But I know my Mother is with me and before me.

RAMGARH, *May 22nd, 1914*

The spiritual bath is not that of water, but of fire. For the water merely takes away the dirt that is superficial, not the dead matter that clings to life, abusing its hospitality. So we must take our plunge into fire, time after time.

We shrink and tremble at the prospect; but the Mother assures us that it will never touch anything that is true and living.

The fire consumes the sin, but not the soul. Our soul is the last thing that we come to know; for it is dark where the Mother feeds the soul in secret. And we can see that sacred sight in the intense glow of the fire of suffering. Sometimes Death brings the torch to light it, and sometimes a messenger whose face is hidden from us.

The latter is at my door. I ask him questions. He answers not. But the fire is burning fiercely, exposing the hidden corners of my being with all their unsuspected accumulations of untruth and self-deception. Let the fire burn until it has nothing to feed upon. Let nothing be spared that awaits destruction.

RAMGARH, *May 23rd, 1914*

Now I feel that I am emerging once again into the air and light and am breathing freely. It is an unspeakable relief to come out into the open and the normal, to regain the balance of life once more, to be able to take again my natural part in the open fair of the world.

Strenuousness is the open foe of attainment. The strength that wins is calm and has an exhaustless resource in its passive depth. Greed is sure to frustrate itself, even the greed after God.

I had been struggling, during these last few days, in a world where shadows held sway and right proportions were lost. The enemies with whom I was fighting were mostly phantoms. But this experience of the dark has had a great lesson for me. Untruth when spread thinly over a large area of life is hardly felt and seen. We live in truce with it. Now that I have had its vision, in all its concentrated ugliness, I am called upon to fight it every day of my life.

RAMGARH, *May 24th, 1914*

To-day I feel as sound as these mountain oaks, ready to store my share of light from the sky and joyfully try my strength with the storm when it comes. Again I feel that I must have all my interests alive, grow on all sides, and enter into various relations with the world, keeping my body and mind fully awake.

Harmony is difficult when one's own nature is complicated; when the strings in the *vina* are numerous and each one claims its right to be tuned.

But I know life is simple, however complex the organism may be; and everything goes to pieces when the living truth of the central simplicity is lost.

RAMGARH, *May 25th, 1914*

Morning is simple, though infinitely more varied than night; for it is open and luminous. Night tries to hide and suppress all problems of reality, making the tyranny of dreams absolute. Light bares the heart of truth; and whatever is unformed or struggling, dying or dead is revealed, not merely at the side but at the root of all that is growing in strength and grace.

We see all the contradictions, yet we feel the inner harmony; strife and struggle are everywhere, yet beauty is supreme. This makes Night, with its phantoms of false mystery of exaggeration, slink away in shame when Morning appears in her simple robe of white. Hope and joy come in her wake all the more triumphant, because not a single blade of grass or thorn is hidden. Morning has dawned upon me at last. My wrestlings with the shadows are over. My heart looks out upon the undulating field of life, chequered with the fruitful green and the pallor of the sandy waste, and feels that all is good. It is vast; it is free to all the horizons; and over it from end to end reigns the light of the sky.

CHAPTER II

THE PERIOD OF the next few months was one of increased tension, followed later by a gradual recovery from the mental strain that had been oppressing the Poet for so long.

At the beginning of the European War this strain had become almost unbearable, owing both to the world tragedy of the war itself and the suffering of Belgium, which the Poet felt most acutely. He wrote and published simultaneously in India and England three poems which expressed the inner conflict going on in his own mind. The first of these was called *The Boatman*, and he told me, when he had written it, that the woman in the silent courtyard, 'who sits in the dust and waits,' represented Belgium. The most famous of the three poems was *The Trumpet*. The third poem was named *The Oarsmen*. Its outlook is beyond the war; for it reveals the daring venture of faith that would be needed by humanity if the old world with its dead things were to be left behind and the vast uncharted and tempestuous seas were to be essayed leading to a world that was new.

A fourth poem, which was not published then, but later, was given to me by the Poet towards the end of the year 1914. On Christmas Day that year he delivered in the Asram a very remarkable address to the students and teachers, speaking of Christ, who was called the Prince of Peace, and how the name of Christ was being denied in Europe.

SANTINIKETAN, *October 4th, 1914*

It seems as though I am coming out of the mist once more, and I am trying to throw off my shoulders the burden that has been oppressing me all these days. As my mind feels lighter, I hope I have rightly earned my freedom.

We have all come to Santiniketan from Surul; and this change has done me good. Dr Maitra has sent me a long letter about you. He thinks you will have to be very careful in future about your health, if you are not to get ill again.

SANTINIKETAN, *October 7th, 1914*

My period of darkness is over once again. It has been a time of very great trial to me, and I believe it was absolutely necessary for my emancipation. I know that I am being lifted from the sphere where I was before; and it is the loneliness of the new situation and the cry of the old life that is still troubling me. But I have glimpses of the ineffable light of joy which I am sure will not fail me. Preaching I must give up, and also trying to take up the role of a beneficent angel to others. I am praying to be lighted from within, and not simply to hold a light in my hand.

DARJEELING, *June 12th, 1914*

Real love is always a wonder. We can never take it for granted. Your love for me I accept with joy and thankfulness, and wonder to which account to put

it. Perhaps every man has some worth unknown to himself, inspiring love through the cover of his self. It gives one a hope that truth is more than appearance, and that we deserve more than we can claim with apparent reason. Love is for the unlimited in us, not for the one who is loudly evident.

Some say that we idealize him we love; but the fact is that we realize through love the ideal in him—and the ideal is the real, if we know it. We have the eternal contradiction in us, that our worth unfolds itself through our unworthiness, and love can go beyond the process, overtaking the ultimate truth. We could never be certain that we are more in truth than we are in fact, if we were not loved.

Give my love to Mr Rudra. Tell him I am hopelessly lost in the wilderness of correspondence, distributing thanks to all quarters of the globe, till not an atom of gratitude is left in my nature.

CALCUTTA, *November 12th, 1914*

I know these school financial difficulties are good for us, but I must have strength enough to extract the good. We must have faith in the Truth. But this faith must be active and self-respecting. The whole Asram must rouse itself from its passive inanity and be ready to meet the danger, never expecting help from outside, but using all its wisdom, self-restraint and resourcefulness.

Our school is a living body. The smallest of us must feel that all its problems are his own; that we must give, in order to gain. Even the little boys should not be kept entirely ignorant of our difficulties. They should be made proud of the fact that they also bear their own share of the responsibility.

CALCUTTA, *November 15th, 1914*

Critics and detectives are naturally suspicious. They scent allegories and bombs where there are no such abominations. It is difficult to convince them of our innocence.

With regard to the criticism of my play, *The King of the Dark Chamber*, that you mention in your letter, the human soul has its inner drama, which is just the same as anything else that concerns Man, and Sudarshana is not more an abstraction than Lady Macbeth, who might be described as an allegory representing the criminal ambition in man's nature. However, it does not matter what things are, according to the rules of the critics. They are what they are, and therefore difficult of classification.

Ramgarh is said to be not unfavourable for wintering; and this it is that has induced me to try to go there for quiet during the next few months till it becomes decently warm and comfortable. But it is a secret of mine, and you must not let it out. Whatever may happen, I must remain beyond the reach of correspondence. I need to be entirely alone. By going to an inaccessible region, I shall escape anniversary meetings, addresses and conferences, and other evils that the flesh is *not* heir to, but which, all the same, fasten upon it without ceremony. It is wicked of me to be away when you are returning to the Asram after your illness; but I feel that you will have a better opportunity of

coming closer to the boys and teachers if I am not there, and that will compensate you for my absence.

AGRA, *December 5th, 1914*

I was surprised to read in the *Modern Review* that our Bolpur boys are going without their sugar and ghee in order to open a relief fund. Do you think this is right? In the first place, it is an imitation of your English schoolboys and not their own original idea. In the second place, so long as the boys live in our institution they are not free to give up any portion of their diet which is absolutely necessary for their health. For any English boy, who takes meat and an amount of fat with it, giving up sugar is not injurious. But for our boys in Santiniketan, who can get milk only in small quantities, and whose vegetable meals contain very little fat ingredients, it is mischievous.

Our boys have no right to choose this form of self-sacrifice—just as they are not free to give up buying books for their studies. The best form of self-sacrifice for them would be to do some hard work in order to earn money; let them take up menial work in our school—wash dishes, draw water, dig wells, fill up the tank which is a menace to their health, do the building work. This would be good in both ways. What is more, it would be a real test of their sincerity. Let the boys think out for themselves what particular works they are willing to take up without trying to imitate others.

ALLAHABAD, *December 18th, 1914*

I feel happy to imagine you lost in the sunny blue and the silent green of our Asram, and I am glad that we have had our talk together before you left. I know from my own experience that our Asram will give you the peaceful detachment of mind needed so much for bringing oneself face to face with one's own inner being and the deeper reality of the world.

You must have recognized by this time that I have something elusive in me, which eludes myself not less than others. Because of this element in my nature, I have to keep my environments free and open, fully to make room in my life for the Undreamt-of who is expected every moment. Believe me, I have a strong human sympathy, yet I can never enter into such relations with others as may impede the current of my life, which flows through the darkness of solitude beyond my ken. I can love, but I have not that which is termed by phrenologists 'adhesiveness'; or to be more accurate, I have a force acting in me, jealous of all attachments, a force that ever tries to win me for itself, for its own hidden purpose.

If this purpose were only moral, it could be more easily tolerated—nay, welcomed; but it is life-purpose—the purpose of growth—and for this very reason it meets with a certain amount of opposition when it crosses with other life-currents. It may seem to be egoistic. But this life-impulse I speak of belongs to a personality which is beyond my ego. I must own this Master in me, who is not a mere abstract moral ideal, but a Person. I must be true to it, even at the cost of what men call happiness, at the risk of being misunderstood, forsaken

and hated. I am sociable by nature, and would intensely like to enjoy the company of friends, the pleasures and advantages of friendship. But I am not free to give myself away, even when it seems necessary and good; and the somewhat wide expanse of time and space that I always try to keep in reserve about me is not mine to use as I wish. This loneliness often becomes hard for me to bear, but I have my ample compensation; and I dare say it will bear fruit for those who know what to expect from it.

The human soul is God's flower. It gives its best bloom and scent, not when shut up in eager palms to be squeezed, but when left alone in the immense freedom of light and air. But, very unfortunately,

The World is too much with us; late and soon
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

My love is bare and reticent. It was gaudily covered in its youthful flowering season; bulging with gifts in its fruitful maturity; but now that its seed-time has come, it has burst its shell and is abroad in the air; it has thrown away all the extra burden of allurements, carrying in its minute covering the density of its life. So when you come and shake the bough for it, it will not answer; for it is not there. But if you can believe in its silence, and accept it in silence, you will not be disappointed.

The following is the translation of the Bengali poem given to me by the Poet at Christmas, 1914:

JUDGEMENT

When, mad in their mirth, they raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful, it made my heart sick.
I cried to thee and said: 'Take thy rod of punishment and judge them.'
The morning light struck upon those eyes, red with the revel of the night; the place of the white lily greeted their burning breath; the stars through the depth of the sacred dark stared at their carousing—at those that raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful!
Thy judgement-seat was in the flower garden; in the birds' notes in springtime; in the shady river banks, where the trees muttered in answer to the muttering of the wave.

O my Lover, they were pitiless in their passion.
They prowled in the dark to snatch thy ornaments to deck their own desires.
When they had struck thee and thou wert pained, it pierced me to the quick, and I cried to thee and said:
'Take thy sword, O my Lover, and judge them!'
Ah, but thy justice was vigilant.
A mother's tears were shed on their insolence; the imperishable faith of a lover hid their spears of rebellion in its own wounds.

Thy judgement was in the mute pain of sleepless love; in the blush of the chaste; in the tears of the night of the desolate; in the pale morning light of forgiveness.

O Terrible, they in their reckless greed climbed thy gate at night, breaking into thy storehouse to rob thee.

But the weight of their plunder grew immense, too heavy to carry or to remove.

Thereupon I cried to thee and said: 'Forgive them, O Terrible!'

Thy forgiveness burst in storms, throwing them down, scattering their thefts in the dust.

Thy forgiveness was in the thunderstone, in the shower of blood; in the angry red of the sunset.

CALCUTTA, *January 20th, 1915*

I could feel from your last letters, hastily written, that you were depressed. Your mind is still in that region of phantoms where shadows are exaggerated and the least thing makes one unhappy. I find that your very happiness is a strain to you—it is so jerky and violent—because very often it comes to you in the shape of reaction. It makes me feel far more anxious about you than your bad health.

CALCUTTA, *January 29th, 1915*

I don't like to frighten you with news of my ill-health, but it must be given to justify my absence from the Asram. I feel that I am on the brink of a breakdown. Therefore I must take flight to the solitude of the Padma. I need rest and the nursing of Nature.

If you ever have a relapse of your illness, do not despair. Try not to fret, or to strain, but to give yourself up to sleep. We must not force ourselves to be too conscious, even of God—our spirit cannot bear it. Depression comes very often from repletion. Our subconscious nature must have sufficient time to store up what our conscious nature requires.

CALCUTTA, *January 31st, 1915*

I hear that you are really ill. This won't do. Come to Calcutta. Consult some doctor; and if he recommends, come to Shileida, where I am going to-morrow morning. I dare not go to Bolpur. I have reached such a sublime depth of tiredness, that it has conferred a dignity on my selfish isolation; and I don't feel the least ashamed of my flight from all responsibilities. I must be alone, with all my heart and soul.

But you must not delay. We are very anxious about you, and we cannot let you breakdown completely.

SHILEIDA, *February 1st, 1915*

You are right. I had been suffering from a time of deep depression and weariness. But I am sane and sound again, and willing to live another hundred years, if critics would spare me. At that time I was physically tired; therefore the

least hurt assumed a proportion that was perfectly absurd. However, I am glad that there is still the child in me, who has its weakness for the sweets of human approbation. I must not feel myself too far above my critics. I don't want my seat on the daïs; let me sit on the same bench with my own audience and try to listen as they do. I am quite willing to know the healthy feeling of disappointment when they don't approve of my things; and when I say 'I don't care!' let nobody believe me.

A great proportion of our humankind is inarticulate. I find I have quite a number of friends among them, and that I need not put any bounds to my estimation of their partiality towards my writings; so that though they do not confirm, neither do they contradict.

I am living in a boat here in a lovely spot. Mukul, Nandalal and another artist are my companions. Their enthusiasm of enjoyment adds to my joy. Every little thing brings to them a sense of surprise, and thus their fresh minds come to my service, bringing to my notice things that I have been getting into the habit of ignoring.

SHILEIDA, *February 3rd, 1915*

Directly I reached here I came to myself, and am now healed. The cure for all the illness of life is stored in the inner depth of life itself, the access to which becomes possible when we are alone. This solitude is a world in itself, full of wonders and resources unthought of. It is so absurdly near, yet so unapproachably distant. But I do not want to talk; please forgive my absence and my silence. I cannot afford to scatter my mind just now.

I do so earnestly hope that you are better.

CALCUTTA, *February 18th, 1915*

Calcutta will keep me till Sunday. I do not expect to free myself from its clutches before them, though I shall try. Anyhow, Monday will see me in Bolpur, somewhat feeble and worn-out, unfit to be trusted with any responsibility.

I hope that Mahatma and Mrs Gandhi have arrived in Bolpur, and Santiniketan has accorded them such a welcome as befits her and them. I shall convey my love personally to them when we meet.

I am glad that our Asram has given shelter to the persecuted Rajput boy. Let him feel that he has won a home in Santiniketan by being driven from his own place and by his own people.

CHAPTER III

IN THE MIDDLE of the month of May 1915, after repeated illnesses from which I had hardly recovered, an attack of Asiatic cholera came suddenly upon me, which proved very nearly fatal. The Poet himself helped to nurse me, and his care and affection were full of the most sensitive tenderness and sympathy. On my account, he did not go away for a holiday during the worst of the hot weather. He waited near at hand, while I was slowly recovering in a nursing-home in Calcutta. At last, when I was able to be moved to Simla, as a convalescent, his letters began again.

During this year 1915 we were so completely outside the range and area of the war, in our isolation in India itself, that it horrors gradually tended to recede into the background of our minds; but the greater thoughts which had been awakened so painfully during the previous year, owing to the war itself—such as the problem of human suffering; the possibility of complete human brotherhood; the meeting of East and West in common fellowship—these were more present than ever before. Our talks together, while I was in the nursing-home in Calcutta, were continually about these problems. They remained deep in the subconscious mind of the Poet all through this year. At the same time, the whole burden of the school work at Santiniketan fell upon his shoulders and he threw himself into every detail of it with his own characteristic energy and determination.

Through the summer of 1915 the Poet's plans were maturing for a visit to the Far East. His father, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, had made his Far Eastern journey more than half a century before, and it had formed one of the means by which he had realized so deeply in his own life the universal brotherhood of man. To the Poet, whose thoughts were always in the terms of Humanity rather than in those of any lesser unit, the fratricidal war in the West revealed the dangerously unbalanced condition of the human race. Out of the agony from which he had suffered in the previous year, both before and after the war had begun, the determination had been ever growing in his own mind to enlarge the bounds of his Asram at Santiniketan, which his father, the Maharshi, had founded as a home of religion. He looked more and more to the time when his Asram would pass beyond the school stage and become a centre of world fellowship, wherein students and teachers from the East and West should be equally honoured and welcomed.

These thoughts were brooding in his mind during the year 1915; therefore it became clear to him that a visit to the Fast East, in order to win the friendship and co-operation of the leading thinkers of China and Japan, would be necessary if the cycle of his work at Santiniketan was to be completed. He had very nearly made up his mind to start in August, and had actually taken his passage on a Japanese steamer, when a series of circumstances intervened which made the journey impossible.

After these plans for a voyage to the Far East had been entirely aban-

doned, a sudden crisis arose in India itself with regard to a humanitarian struggle against the indentured system of Indian labour in the colonies. My friend W.W. Pearson and I had fully investigated and condemned this system in Natal, and we were therefore more immediately in touch with the direct problem than other people. The immoral and servile conditions of indentured Indian labour had to be thoroughly exposed. For this reason, after the tour to the Far East had been abandoned, we received the Poet's cordial consent, when we proposed to go out together to Fiji and carry through an independent inquiry into the indenture system of Indian labour in that colony. He felt very keenly indeed that this new journey of ours would be in keeping with his own ideals of universal brotherhood and fellowship, and he gave us his blessing on our departure. Two texts from the Upanishad were his own gift to me when we bade him farewell.

They may be translated as follows:

> From Joy all things have their origin: in Joy they subsist, and unto Joy they return.
> I meditate upon His glory, who creates the earth, the sky and the stars, and sends into our minds the power of comprehension.

The inspiration which Rabindranath Tagore thus gave to us, by his encouragement and sympathy, carried us through what proved to be the most difficult journey we had ever undertaken. In the end, the inquiry we made very nearly effected its object; and the pledge was given that the whole indenture system of Indian labour would be abolished at the earliest possible moment.

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SANTINIKETAN, *June 30th, 1915*

Just now I am in Santiniketan. It still has the holiday atmosphere; for only a few boys have come back, and it is not unlikely that some of them have left for good. So our Finance Minister will have a hard time before him with arrears to clear off and the buildings to complete. Do not try to come now, however strong you may feel—for financial difficulties are just as bad as disease germs in their insidious attacks on our health. However, be assured that this bad time will not be thrown away on us altogether, and we shall come out of it with more freedom than ever, if considerably thinner.

As for myself, I have the call of the open road, though most of the roads are closed. I am in a nomadic mood, but it is becoming painful to me for want of freedom. I am carrying, as it were, my tents on my back, instead of living in them.

Possibly my life is on the eve of another bursting of its pods and scattering of its seeds; there is that continual urgency in my blood, the purpose of which is hidden. The conclusion is being forced upon me that poets should never bind themselves to any particular work; for they are the instruments of the world's moods. And after the years of building up all kinds of benevolent schemes, my life is emerging once again upon the open health of irresponsibility, where the sun rises and sets, where there are wild flowers, but no committee meetings.

CALCUTTA, *July 7th, 1915*

Haven't I confessed elsewhere that renunciation is not for me, and that my freedom is to be moving from bondage to bondage? My mind must realize itself anew. Once I give form to my thought, I must free myself from it. For the time being, it seems to me that I want absolute freedom to create new forms for new ideas. I am sure physical death has the same meaning for us—the creative impulse of our soul must have new forms for its realization. Death can continue to dwell in the same sepulchre, but life must unceasingly outgrow its dwelling-place; otherwise the form gets the upper hand and becomes a prison. Man is immortal; therefore he must die endlessly. For life is a creative idea; it can only find itself in changing forms.

Forms are stupid dumb things, that struggle to stand still, until at last they break into pieces.

You will have heard about all my plans from Pearson. I am seeking my freedom by surrendering my ideas into the hands of a new bondage. In Santiniketan, some of my thoughts have become clogged by accumulations of dead matter. I do not believe in lecturing, or in compelling fellow-workers by coercion; for all true ideas must work themselves out through freedom. Only a moral tyrant can think that he has the dreadful power to make his thoughts prevail by means of subjection. It is absurd to imagine that you must create slaves in order to make your ideas free. I would rather see them perish than leave them in the charge of slaves to be nourished. There are men who make idols of their ideas, and sacrifice humanity before their altars. But in my worship of the idea I am not a worshipper of Kali.

So the only course left open to me, when my fellow-workers fall in love with the form and cease to have complete faith in the idea, is to go away and give my idea a new birth and create new possibilities for it. This may not be a practical method, but possibly it is the right one.

CALCUTTA, *July 11th, 1915*

Conscientious men are comfortable men; they live within the bounds of their duties, and consequently enjoy their fixed proportion of leisure. But I shirk my duties in order to create works that eat up all my time; and then I suddenly leave my work and try to elope with unmitigated indolence.

I shall be floating on the Padma before the next week is out, and shall forget to imagine that my presence in the Council of Creation is imperatively necessary for the betterment of Humanity. I am a born nomad—as I am sure you are—and my work has to be fluid, if it is to be my work. But absolute fluidity in work can only be had at its commencement. Therefore my duty is to start things and then leave them. Unless I leave them and keep at a distance, I cannot help them in maintaining their ideal character. But, this time, it is the fatigue of my body and mind that is driving me into solitude. The kind of work that I can do in a particular scheme requires freshness of mind more than perseverance. Therefore there must be a break before I resume my duties.

It is easy for me to understand the stress of pain that you are feeling now

about the wrongs of the world, and especially among the weaker races of mankind, who are oppressed by the strong. Human wrongs are not pitiable, they are terrible. Those who are in power forget every day that it is for their very power's sake that they have to be just. When God's appeal comes from the weak and the poor, then it is full of danger for those who are in power; for then they are apt to think that they can disregard it with impunity, especially if it upsets their office arrangements in the very least degree. They have more faith in their pitiful system and their prestige than in moral providence.

In India, when the upper classes ruled over the lower, they forged their own chains. Europe is closely following Brahmin India, when she looks upon Asia and Africa as her legitimate fields for exploitation. The problem would be simpler if she could altogether denude other continents of their population; but so long as there are alien races, it will be difficult for Europe to realize her moral responsibility with regard to them. The gravest danger is when Europe deceives herself into thinking that she is helping the cause of humanity by helping herself; that men are essentially different, and what is good for her people is not good for others who are inferior. Thus Europe, gradually and imperceptibly, is losing faith in her own ideals and weakening her own moral supports.

But I must not go on weaving truisms; and on our own side I must equally acknowledge this truth, that weakness is heinous because it is a menace to the strong and the surest cause of downfall for others than those who own it. It is a moral duty for every race to cultivate strength, so as to be able to help the world's balance of power to remain even. We are doing England the greatest disservice possible by making it easy for her to despise us and yet to rule; to feel very little sympathy for us and yet to judge us.

Will Europe never understand the genesis of the present war, and realize that the true cause lies in her own growing scepticism towards her own ideals—those ideals that have helped her to be great? She seems to have exhausted the oil that once lighted her lamp. Now she is feeling a distrust against the oil itself, as if it were not at all necessary for her light.

SHILEIDA, *July 16th, 1915*

I wonder whether you got my last letter, which I wrote to you in a railway train, informing you of my proposed visit to Japan.

I am busy floating my dreams, as the children do their paper boats, on this wide expanse of green, gold and blue. This world is wonderfully beautiful, but you cannot help feeling that there is a lurking pain in its heart, which has its own immortal beauty. It is a pearl shell of wonderful tints and design, hiding in its bosom a teardrop, which gives it priceless value. All our payments have to be made in pain; otherwise life and this world would become cheap as dirt.

SHILEIDA, *July 23rd, 1915*

After long years I have come among my tenants; and I feel, and they also, that my presence was needed. It was a great event of my life when I first dwelt among my own people here, for thus I came into contact with the reality of life.

For in them you feel the barest touch of humanity. Your attention is not diverted, and then you truly know that Man is very much to man. One is apt to forget them, just as one does not think of the earth on which one walks.

But these men compose the great mass of life, which sustains all civilizations and bears their burdens. They are content barely to live, so that others may prove that man's life is a great deal more than mere existence. They keep steady the level of the minimum, which is enormous quantitatively, so that the maximum may be unhampered by its own development. Thousands of acres of land are tilled, so that a University can be maintained upon one acre. Yet these men are insulted merely because while they are so absolutely necessary, it is their necessity to live that drives them to this position. They are in their place because they cannot help it.

We all hope that here, at this very point, Science in the end will help man. She will make the necessities of life easily accessible to every man, so that humanity will be freed from the tyranny of matter which now humiliates her. This struggling mass of men is great in its pathos, in its latency of infinite power. It is beautiful where it is simple and spontaneous; sublime where it is large, deep and enduring. I must confess that I have been neglecting these people, while I was away from them in Santiniketan; and I am glad that I am now with them once more, so that I may be more actively mindful of them. I am afraid my life at the Asram was at last making me into a teacher, which was unsatisfactory for me, because unnatural. But one has to be a helper to be a real man; for then you share your life with your fellow-beings and not merely your ideas.

CALCUTTA, *July 29th, 1915*

The Infinite Being is not complete if He remains absolutely infinite. He must realize Himself through the finite; that is, through creation. The impulse to realize comes from the fullness of joy; but the process must be through pain. You cannot ask why it should be—why the Infinite should attain truth by passing through the finitude; why the joy should be the cause of suffering, in order to come back to itself—for it is so. And when our minds are illumined, we feel glad that it is so.

When we fix all our attention to that side of the Infinite where it is pain and death, where it is the process of fufilment, we are overwhelmed. But we must know that there is the positive side; that always there is a completeness along with the incomplete. Otherwise, there would be no pity in us for the suffering; no love in us for the imperfect.

What I am trying to express is this: you saw the monkey dead entangled in the telegraph-wires, while round it was beauty in all its superbness. The incongruity struck you as cruel. That is something. The cruelty would not have been apparent to you if ugliness were absolute. You felt the pity of it, because there is the ideal of perfection. Here, in this ideal, lies our hope and the ultimate solution of our doubts. In creation, joy is always getting the better of pain, otherwise our sympathy for pain would be unmeaning.

Then why should we despair? We cannot fathom the mystery of exist-

ence. But this much we have known, that there is a love which is greater in truth than pain and death. Is not that sufficient for us?

SANTINIKETAN, *August 7th, 1915*

Your letter was of great interest to me. I have one principle to guide my thoughts in most things of vital importance. It is this, that the figure which represents creation is not 'one,' but 'two.' In the harmony of two contradictory forces everything rests. Whenever our logic tries to simplify things, by reducing the troublesome 'two' into 'one,' it goes wrong. Some philosophies say that motion is all *maya* and truth is static; others are of the opinion that truth is fluid and it is only *maya* that represents truth to us as static.

But truth is beyond logic; it is the everlasting miracle; it is static and dynamic at the same time; it is ideal and real; it is finite and infinite.

The principle of war and that of peace both make truth. They are contradictory; they seem to hurt each other, like the finger and the strings; but this very contradiction produces music. When only one predominates, there is the sterility of silence. Our problem is not only whether we should have war or peace, but how to harmonize them perfectly.

So long as there is such a thing as force, we cannot say that we must not use force, but rather that we must not abuse it, as we are prone to do when we make it the sole standard and ignore love. When love and force do not go together, then love is mere weakness and force is brutal. Peace becomes death when it is alone. War becomes a demon when it destroys its mate.

Of course, we must not think for a moment that killing one another is a necessary form of war. Man is pre-eminently on a moral plane, and his weapons should be moral weapons.

SANTINIKETAN, *September 23rd, 1915*

[*Written on the eve of our departure to Fiji*]

The golden bell of the autumn sun tolls silently and the period for migration has come. You and Pearson are the first of our brood who have left their nest for the passage across the seas; and I can hardly control my wings. Things round us have their weight, and they gradually sink into our soul without our knowing it, till one day we are oppressed with a burden whose nature we hardly know. Movement is the only cure when life becomes heavy with *dêbris.*

My heart at this moment is like a leaky boat, full of water, that can just keep itself afloat, but the least burden of responsibility becomes too much for it. I must go to the wilderness and take upon myself the severe discipline of freedom. I want to say 'No' emphatically to all the importunities of the world; to all the moral ar d social obligations. But in spite of my protestations, I am afraid that I shall have to end my days as an ascetic—with certain modifications.

I am going on with the rehearsal, and rather like it. For it gives me opportunity to come close to the little boys, who are a perpetual source of pleasure to me.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER OUR RETURN from Fiji, at the end of January 1916, the longings of the Poet to go out to the Far East became insistent. He took W.W. Pearson, Mukul Dey the artist and myself with him on this voyage. We sailed from Calcutta on the *Tosa Maru*. In the Bay of Bengal our vessel passed through a terrible cyclone and had great difficulty in weathering the storm. Our stay in China was very short, because the people of Japan were impatiently waiting for the Poet's arrival in their own country. They received him with enthusiasm at first, as one who had brought honour to Asia.

But when he spoke out strongly against the militant imperialism which he saw on every side in Japan and set forward in contrast to his own ideal picture of the true meeting of East and West, with its vista of world brotherhood, the hint went abroad that such 'pacifist' teaching was a danger in war-time, and that the Indian Poet represented a defeated nation. Therefore, almost as rapidly as the enthusiasm had arisen, it subsided. In the end, he was almost isolated, and the object for which he had come to the Far East remained unfulfilled. It was at this time that he wrote his poem called *The Song of the Defeated*, which begins:

> My Master bids me, while I stand at the wayside, to sing the song of defeat.
> For that is the bride whom He woos in secret.

These summer months in Japan, at a time when the fever of militarism was at its height, were filled with disappointment. The mental suffering which had appeared at the beginning of the war returned. The Poet's whole inner nature was in revolt against the violently aggressive spirit of the age. All this is brought out in his book called *Nationalism*, the first chapters of which were written in Japan at a white heat. These lectures, delivered in Japan, were reprinted in Europe. They were translated into French in Switzerland by Romain Rolland towards the end of the year 1916. It needs to be added that at a later visit to Japan, in 1924, these earlier impressions, formed in war-time, were considerably modified. He found then in Japan, as also in China, those who were eager to appreciate his universal message.

The Poet went from Japan to America, accompanied by W.W. Pearson and Mukul Dey, while I returned to the Asram. His stay in America was crowded with engagements. He made new friends and received great kindness at their hands. In many ways he was satisfied with his visit, and felt that it had been a success. But he fell ill there, and after a short time came back home by way of the Pacific, only staying between steamers in Japan and China.

Shortly after his arrival at the Asram it became necessary for me to go out again to Fiji, in order to obtain the final and complete abolition of the indenture system of Indian labour. The years 1917 and 1918 were fully taken up by the Poet with quiet fruitful work at Santiniketan. All the while, his plans for widening the scope and aim of his educational enterprise, after the war was

over, were slowly shaping themselves in his mind. These will come forward as the main subject in the succeeding chapters in this book; for they began to absorb his whole attention.

After returning from Fiji, early in the year 1918, I was free to remain at the Asram. Since I was constantly with the Poet from that time onwards, I received no letters from him, but some which he sent to W.W. Pearson in England may serve to keep touch with his thoughts up to the close of this period.

SRINAGAR, KASHMIR, *October 12th, 1915*

I am technically in Kashmir, but still have not entered its gate. I am passing through the purgatory of public receptions and friendly solicitations; but Paradise is in sight. Now I feel I am coming nearer myself; the intruder in me, who always fusses about arranging and dusting his absurd store of knicknacks, is, I hope, shut out at least for a few weeks. It is becoming easier for me to feel that it is I who bloom in flowers, spread in the grass, flow in the water, scintillate in the stars, live in the lives of men of all ages.

When I sit in the morning outside on the deck of my boat, before the majestic purple of the mountains, crowned with the morning light, I know that I am eternal, that I am *ananda-rupam*.[1] My true form is not that of flesh or blood, but of joy. In the world where we habitually live, the self is so predominant that everything in it is of our own making and we starve because we have to feed upon ourselves. To know truth is to become true; there is no other way. When we live the life of self, it is not possible for us to realize truth.

'Come out, come away.' This is the urgent cry we have in our soul—the cry in the blood of the chick, living in its shell. It is not merely truth that frees us, but freedom that gives us truth. That is why Buddha dwelt on the importance of freeing our lives from trammels of self; for then Truth comes of itself.

Now I understand at last that the restlessness that has been so persistent with me is of this nature—I must come out from the life of habit, the life of compromise, the life of self. I think the first step towards it is going to the solitude.

My coming to Kashmir has helped me to know clearly what I want. It is likely that it will become obscured again when I go back to my usual routine; but these occasional detachments of life from the usual round of customary thoughts and occupations lead to the final freedom—the Santam, Sivam, Advaitam. The first stage towards freedom is the Santam, the true peace, which can be attained by subduing self; the next stage is the Sivam, the true goodness, which is the activity of the soul when self is subdued; and then the Advaitam, the love, the oneness with all and with God.

Of course this division is merely logical; these stages, like rays of light, may be simultaneous or divided according to the circumstances, and their order may be altered, such as the Sivam leading the Santam. But all we must know

[1] Literally, "Joy-Form". This is a part of a famous Sanskrit text.

is that the Santam, Sivam, Advaitam, is the only goal for which we live and struggle.

SHILEIDA, *February 3, 1916*

Coming away from Calcutta, I have come to myself. Every time it is a new discovery to me. In the town, life is so crowded that one loses the true perspective. After a while it makes me feel weary of everything, simply because the truth of our own self is lost sight of. We have our Lover waiting in the depth of our being. Unless we come to him, time after time, the tyranny of things grows intolerable. We must know that our greatest resource of all is lying hidden in our heart. We have to be assured of it in order to be cured of our miserliness.

SHILEIDA, *February 5th, 1916*

You know the English translation of my poem about 'taking truth simply.' Last night, while reading it in *The Gardener* along with others, it seemed to me strangely incongruous in its semi-metrical form. It was like meeting a woman dressed in tights in the midst of others dressed in simple *saris*. So I tried to divest it of its metrical disguise, though it is difficult to exorcise altogether the ghost of the old metre.

Whatever may come, my heart, take truth simply,
Though there be some who can love you, there must be others who never can, and if you must know the cause, it is as much in you as in them, and in all things around.
Some doors are closed against your knocks, while your doors are not open always and to all comers.
Such has been and shall be for evermore; and yet if you must have peace, my heart, take truth simply.
There is no need to be abusive if your boat founders by the shore, though it sailed through the storm.
Keep yourself afloat by all means; but if it is impossible to do so, then be good enough to sink without noise.
It is a commonplace fact that things may or may not fit you and events happen without asking for your leave.
Yet if you must have peace, my heart, take truth simply.
You press and are pressed hard in the crowd, but space there is enough and to spare in this world.
When you have counted your losses to the last farthing, your sky remains as blue as ever.
You find, when suddenly tested, that to live is sweeter than to die.
You may miss this and that and the other thing, but if you must have peace, my heart, take truth simply.
Must you stand with your back to the rising sun and watch your shadow lengthened before you?
Must you take pleasure in finding fault with your destiny and thus tease your soul to death?

Then for mercy's sake be quick and have done with it; for if, with the evening stars, you must light your lamp, my heart, take truth simply.

SHILEIDA, *February 24th, 1916*

Where are you? Seven fathoms deep in your report-writing? When are you going to float up into the sun and sail on, dancing with all surface-drifts of existence?

I have my work here, but it is play as well. It does not savour of office and officials; it has its humour and some amount of pathos. It is almost like painting a picture.

Pearson has succeeded in getting ill and joining me on my trip.

SANTINIKETAN, *July 9th, 1917*

This is the first time that you have given me your address in your letter since your departure for Fiji. We have been feeling very anxious since we learnt about your accident and injury to your back and leg.

The boys have begun their agriculture in right earnest under the leadership of Santosh Mitra; and I believe it is not going to be like the road—the brilliant work of Nepal Babu—which suddenly stops, with a sublime futility, at the brink of Nowhere. The artist Surendranath Kar has joined our school, and his presence is very much appreciated by the boys and the teachers. Our former student and a veteran of Calcutta football fields, Gora, has taken up the work of a mathematical teacher, and I am sure he will prove to be a valuable acquisition to us.

The rainy season this year, like a great many of our boys, did not wait until the vacation was over, but made its appearance before the time and has been very seriously attending to its business ever since. I have taken my seat of indolence at the window of my second storey—in the middle region between the extravagant pageantry of the clouds and the immense spread of the exuberant green of the earth.

There was a time when my life seemed to be an overflow of spendthriftness in a reckless Universe, before Purposefulness crept into the Eden Garden of my youth and changed the naked felicity of existence into the draped decency of a fashionable cut. I am waiting to regain that Lost Paradise of mind, to forget that I must be of any use to anybody, and to know that the true purpose of my life is the great purpose in me of All-time and All-world, urging me to be fully what I am.

And am I not a poet? What business have I to be anything else? But unfortunately I am like an inn, where the poet lodger has to accommodate strange bedfellows by his side. Yet is it not high time for me to retire from this none too lucrative business of the innkeeper? Anyway, I am feeling tired, and my duty to my numerous lodgers is in imminent danger of being shamefully neglected.

SHILEIDA, *July 20th, 1917*

The accompanying letter is from Pearson. I am glad that he has come out of his seclusion feeling better in mind and body.

After a separation of nearly a year and a half, I have come once more to my Padma and have renewed my courtship. She is unchanged in her changeableness. She is shifting her course and leaving the side of Shileida. She is showing a decided preference for Pabna. My only consolation is that she cannot remain constant for long.

It is a beautiful day to-day. The sunshine is coming out after the fitful showers of rain, like a boy emerging from his dive in the sea with his naked limbs glowing and glistening.

[*The letters that follow were written to W. W. Pearson.*]

CALCUTTA, *March 6th, 1918*

Each one of us in this unfortunate country is looked upon with suspicion, and our British rulers cannot see us clearly through the dust which they themselves raise. Humiliation follows us at every step and in each good work we try to do.

All blind methods are easy methods at the beginning. But such cheap methods as these do not pay in the end. For, after all, mere bullying is stupidity; it assumes frightfulness only because it does not know its way. What is radically wrong with our rulers is this: they are fully aware that they do not know us, and yet they do not *care* to know us. And, in consequence, thorny hedges are springing up of unscrupulous intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled, giving rise to conditions which are not only miserable, but unspeakably vulgar.

I have just received a letter from Thadani, complaining of the insults and harassments which only Indian British subjects have to go through in British ports. These have the effect of making them feel ashamed of the Government under which they live. Such invidious treatment is sinking deeply into the memory of my people, and the moral providence of history cannot altogether ignore such an accumulated burden of indignities loaded upon humanity.

SANTINIKETAN, *March 10th, 1918*

I can guess from your letter that some questions are troubling your mind about the best way of self-realization. There can be no single path for all individuals; for we vastly differ in our natures and habits. But all great masters agree in their teaching on one cardinal point, saying that we must forget our personal self in order to attain our spiritual freedom. Buddha and Christ have both of them said that this self-abnegation is not something which is negative—its positive aspect is love.

We can only love that which is profoundly real to us. The larger number of men have the most intense feeling of reality only for themselves; and they can never get out of the limits of their self-love. The rest of mankind can be

divided into two classes—those who have their love for persons and those who have their love for ideas.

Generally speaking, women fall into the first category and men into the second. In India this fact has been recognized. Therefore our teachers have pointed out two different paths for the two different sexes.

It has been said that women can attain their emancipation by sublimating their personal relationships into the realm of the ideal. If, in spite of all obvious contradictions, a woman can realize in her husband something which transcends his personal limitations, then through her devotion to him she touches the Infinite and thus is freed from the bondage of self. Through the luminous intensity of her love, her husband and her child reveal to her the ultimate Truth which is divine. For biological reasons, men's natures have had comparative freedom from the attachment to persons, and therefore it has become easier for them to find direct access to those ideas, lying behind the screen of things, which they have ever been pursuing in all their knowledge and creative activities. Once you become conscious of the idea, as the inner spirit of reality, the joy becomes so unbounded that your self becomes obliterated, and you can easily lay aside all that you have for its sake.

But we must keep in mind that love of persons and love of ideas can both be terribly egoistic, and therefore may lead to bondage instead of setting us free.

It is only constant sacrifice in service which can loosen the shackles. We must not merely enjoy our love (whether personal or ideal) by contemplating its beauty and truth, but rather make it fruitful giving expression to it in our life's work. Our life is the material whereby we have to build the image of the ideal of Truth that we have in our mind. But life, like all other materials, contains an obstinate antagonism to the idea to which it must give shape. Only through the active process of creation can such antagonism be discovered at every step and chiselled away at every stroke.

Look at the aboriginal Santal women around our Asram. In them the ideal of physical life finds perfect development only because they are ever active in giving it expression in work. Their figures and their movements attain their beautiful harmony because they are always being tuned by life's activities. The one thing which I am never tired of admiring is the vigorous cleanliness of their limbs, which never get soiled even by the constant contact with dirt. Our ladies, with their soaps and scents, only give an artificial polish to the superficial body; but the cleanliness which is induced by the body's own current of movement, coming from the completeness of physical health, can never be theirs.

The same happens with regard to our spiritual body. It is not by meticulous care in avoiding all contaminations that we can keep our spirit clean and give it grace, but by urging it to give vigorous expression to its inner life in the very midst of all the dust and heat.

But I must stop to find out if I have given in what I have written any answer to the original question you have put to me. It may be that I have not; for it is

difficult to know exactly what you want of me. You have spoken of impersonal love and impersonal work, and you ask me which I consider to be the greater. To me, they appear as one, like the sun and the light; for love's expression is in work. Where love has no work, there is a dead world.

SANTINIKETAN, *October 6th, 1918*

All through this last session in the Asram, I have been taking school classes in the morning and spending the rest of the day in writing text-books. It is a kind of work apparently unsuitable for a man of my temperament. Yet I have found it not only interesting but restful. The mind has its own burden, which can be lightened when it is floated on a stream of work. Some engrossing ideas also help us in the same way. But ideas are unreliable; they run according to no time-table whatever; and the hours and days you spend in waiting for them grow heavy.

Lately I have come to that state of mind when I could not afford to wait for inspiration of ideas; so I surrendered myself to some work which was not capricious, but had its daily supply of coal to keep it running. However, this teaching was not a monotonous piece of drudgery for me; for I have been treating my students as living organisms; and any dealing with life can never be dull.

Unfortunately, poets cannot be expected to enjoy lucid intervals for long. Directly some new subject takes possession of their minds, they become useless for all decent purposes. They are intellectual gypsies; vagrancy is in their blood; and already I feel the call of the irresponsible vagabondage, a kind of passion for extravagant idleness. The schoolmaster in me is perilously near being lured away by the mischievous imps of truancy.

I am going to move away from this place in a day or two, with the ostensible reason of visiting South India, from where invitations have been pouring in upon me for a long time; but I tell you in confidence, it is the lapse of reason—my frequent visitor—the Spirit of Truancy, that is beckoning me, ready to escort me over all lines of proscribed works. I long to discover some fairy-land of holidays—not a lotus-land—not a world where all weekdays are Sundays—but where Sundays are not at all needed, where all works carry their rest in themselves, where all duties look delightfully undutiful, like clouds bearing rain, appearing perfectly inconsequential.

SANTINIKETAN, *December 11th, 1918*

Yesterday I had a letter from the University of Sydney asking me if it was true that I would not visit Australia, even if I was wanted there. I have written, in answer, that it would be wrong on my part if I refused to accept any invitation sent in the right spirit. Pride of patriotism is not for me. I earnestly hope that I shall find my home anywhere in the world, before I leave it. We have to fight against wrongs, and suffer for the cause of righteousness; but we should have no petty jealousies or quarrels with our neighbours merely because we have different names.

The barrier of Self is *maya.* When it is dispelled, then we in our suffering have tasted the draught of sorrow that wells up from the heart of creation, flowing out to be merged and transformed into the sea of endless joy.

When we do not see ourselves in the Infinite, when we imagine our sorrow to be our very own, then life becomes untrue and its burden becomes heavy. I understand more and more the truth of Buddha's teaching, that the root of all our miseries is this self-consciousness. We have to realize the consciousness of the All before we can solve the mystery of pain and be free.

Our emancipation lies through the path of suffering. We must unlock the gate of joy by the key of pain. Our heart is like a fountain. So long as it is driven through the narrow channel of self it is full of fear and doubt and sorrow; for then it is dark and does not know its end. But when it comes out into the open, on the bosom of the All, then it glistens in the light and sings in the joy of freedom.

CHAPTER V

THE LETTERS THAT now remain to be quoted form an almost uninterrupted series, though I have continued to divide them into chapters. They were written by the Poet during a long tour, in Europe and America, in which he was accompanied by his friend W.W. Pearson.

Out of the misery and darkness of the Great War, Rabindranath Tagore had been led, step by step, to the one fixed purpose of gradually forming at Santiniketan Asram a home of brotherhood and peace, where East and West might meet in a common fellowship of study and work.

At first his design had been to gather together at his Asram the scattered religious cultures of Asia in order to present them in a united manner to the rest of the world. But his comprehensive vision could not stop at any horizon that was less wide than humanity. During the years 1918 and 1919 he took me with him on many tours, while he wandered up and down India, seeking to find a seed-ground in which his thoughts concerning human progress might take root in the soil and afterwards bear fruit. I was able to watch in these tours this one central purpose that I have mentioned taking concrete shape. He pictured to himself Santiniketan opening its doors to the whole world, and inviting those who were lovers of peace and good will, in East and West alike, to come together there, on equal terms, without distinction of caste or race or creed.

He named the institution which should offer such world-hospitality Visva-bharati. 'Visva' in Sanskrit means 'world,'—in its universal aspect. 'Bharati' is more difficult to translate, but implies knowledge, wisdom, culture. Visva-bharati was to be a House of Learning for all peoples and all religions.

The Poet traced back his whole conception to the Upanishads and had in his mind those forest Asrams, or religious retreats, of ancient India, which were freely open to all who came to them, and made their guests welcome with the fullness of fellowship and love. One of the most celebrated of his lectures was called 'The Religion of the Forest.' In a noble passage from another lecture he concludes with the following words:

> Our forefathers spread a single pure white carpet, whereon all the world was cordially invited to take its seat in amity and good-fellowship. No quarrel could have arisen there; for He in whose name the invitation went forth, for all time to come, was Santam, Sivam, Advaitam—the Peaceful, in the heart of all conflicts; the Good, who is revealed through all losses and sufferings; the One, in all diversities of creation. And in His name was this eternal truth declared in Ancient India:
>
> He alone sees truly who sees all beings as himself.

For the fulfilment of his central purpose it was necessary for him to go once more to Europe and America in order to gain the support of the West

and to invite the West to his Asram. But at the very time when he was beginning to prepare for his journey certain disturbances occurred in the Punjab which for a time threw everything else into the background. Riots had occurred and reprisals had been taken. At the critical moment when the news came about Amritsar I happened to be with him in Calcutta, and it will be impossible for me ever to forget the torture of his mind. Night after night was passed sleeplessly. At last some relief came to him by renunciation of his knighthood as a protest against what had been done. For a time it seemed as though 'Amritsar' had shattered all his hopes and aims.

But while he felt such intense sensitiveness, as a poet, at the wrong which had been done to humanity in Jallianwalla Bagh, he took his stand at once against any memorial being erected upon the spot as a permanent record of the deed of blood. In the same way, on an earlier occasion, when asked in Japan to celebrate, by means of a short poem, to be engraved on a rock, a tragic story concerning a blood-feud, he wrote:—

They hated and killed, and men praised them,
But God in shame hastened to hide its memory under the green grass.

I have mentioned these facts because they belong essentially to the period covered by the letters which follow. They reveal the inner spirit of the Poet as at last, after long absence, he approached Europe in the year 1920. With a great effort he had recovered his serenity of mind. His faith in the generous spirit of the West had passed through its ordeal of fire. Deep down in his subconscious nature he had been wounded at heart by the events of the previous year in the Punjab. Therefore it was with great anxiety that I watched his vessel depart from Bombay, and went back to the Asram.

RED SEA, *May 24th, 1920*

We shall reach Suez this evening. It is already beginning to grow cold, and now I feel that we have reached a truly foreign part of the world under the rule of different gods than ours. Our hearts are strangers in this region and even the atmosphere of this place looks askance at us. The people here want us to fight their battle and supply them with our raw materials, but they keep us standing outside their doors, over which is written on the notice-board: 'Trespassers from Asia will be prosecuted.' When I think of all this, my thoughts shiver with cold and I feel home-sick for the sunny corner in my Santiniketan bungalow.

To-day is Monday, and next Sunday morning our steamer will reach Marseilles. But I am already counting the days for my return journey; and I know the sight of the bare rocks of Aden will give a thrill of delight to my heart while pointing with lifted fingers the way to India.

LONDON, *June 17th, 1920*

Time is scarce, and sugar, and butter, and a quiet place where I can gather thoughts and recognize myself. Do not expect long letters from me, or indeed anything else. The fury of social engagements is on me. It is a thing on

which one might compose an Ode like that on the West Wind. I am willing to try, if only it would allow me some time to do it. The poet Hafiz was willing to exchange the wealth of Samarkand and Bokhara for a mole on the cheek of his beloved. I am willing to give the whole of London away for my corner in Santiniketan. But London is not mine to dispose of; neither was the wealth of Samarkand and Bokhara the Persian poet's. So our extravagance does not cost us anything, nor does it bring us any help.

I am going to Oxford to-morrow. Then I shall be knocking about in different places. Just at this moment I am starting for a tea-party given in my honour, from which I cannot absent myself on any pretext, unless I can manage to be run over by a motor-car in the London streets. It is a matter of eternal wonder to me that this does not happen to me four times a day. You won't believe in my scarcity of time if I go on to the end of the note-paper. So I hastily bid you farewell.

LONDON, *July 8th, 1920*

Every day I have been wishing to write you a letter—but the flesh is weak. My days have become solid like cannon-balls, heavy with engagements. It is not true that I have no leisure at all, but unfortunately I cannot utilize interrupted leisure for any work whatever. Therefore those intervals are lost doing nothing.

I am sure you know it, better than anybody else, that doing nothing is a burden hard to bear. But if you look at my exterior, you will find no trace of damage there—for my health is absurdly good.

I hope Pearson is regularly furnishing you with all the news. He has been of very great help to me, as you can well imagine, and I find that the arduous responsibility of looking after a poet suits him wonderfully well. He is looking the very picture of health, and on the whole his dreams are felicitous. For instance, last night he dreamt that he had been buying strawberries as large as gourds. It proves the magnificent vitality of his dreams.

I know our school vacation is over. The boys are back at school and the Asram is resounding with laughter and song. The advent of the rains is also contributing its portion to the general rejoicing. How I wish I had wings! Give my love to all the children, and my blessings.

LONDON, *July 12th, 1920*

It gave me great joy, and a feeling of relief, when your sister came to see me yesterday and gave me reassuring news about your other sister. She repeatedly asked me to tell you that there was not the least cause for anxiety on account of them, and that they were comfortably settled in their new home. I gave her all the news about you, but unfortunately could not assure her that you were careful of your own health.

Invitations are pouring in from the continental countries, and I feel sure that a hearty welcome is awaiting me in these places. When I am weary and feel a longing to go back, it gives me strength to think that the migratory flock of my thoughts have found their nest on these shores, and with genuine love and

wonder these enormously busy people have listened to a voice from the distant East.

This is a constant surprise to me. However, there is no question that one only truly and fully lives where one's thoughts and works find their medium of responsive life. When I am in the West, I feel more strongly than ever that I am received in a living world of mind. I miss here my sky and light and leisure, but I am in touch with those who feel and express their need of me and to whom I can offer myself.

It is not unlikely that some time hence my thoughts will no longer be necessary to them and my personality will lose its flavour; but does it matter? The tree sheds its leaves, but the fact is that so long as these were living they brought sunshine into the heart of the tree and their voice was the voice of the forest; and my communication with Western humanity has been a communication of life. Even when it ceases, the fact remains that it brought some rays of light there, which have been transformed into the living stuff of their minds. Our span of life is short and opportunities are rare, so let us sow our seeds of thought where the soul claims them and where the harvest will ripen.

LONDON, *July 22nd, 1920*

The result of the Dyer debates in both Houses of Parliament makes painfully evident the attitude of mind of the ruling classes of this country towards India. It shows that no outrage, however monstrous, committed against us by agents of their Government, can arouse feelings of indignation in the hearts of those from whom our governors are chosen.

The unashamed condonation of brutality expressed in their speeches and echoed in their newspapers is ugly in its frightfulness. The feeling of humiliation about our position under the Anglo-Indian domination had been growing stronger every day for the last fifty years or more; but the one consolation we had was our faith in the love of justice in the English people, whose soul had not been poisoned by that fatal dose of power which could only be available in a Dependency where the manhood of the entire population had been crushed down into helplessness.

Yet the poison has gone further than we expected, and it has attacked the vital organs of the British nation. I feel that our appeal to their higher nature will meet with less and less response every day. I only hope that our countrymen will not lose heart at this, but employ all their energies in the service of their country with a spirit of indomitable courage and determination.

The late events have conclusively proved that our true salvation lies in our own hands; that a nation's greatness can never find its foundation in half-hearted concessions of contemptuous niggardliness.

It is the sign of a feeble character to seek for a short-cut to fulfilment through the favour of those whose interest lies in keeping it barred—the one path to fulfilment is the difficult path of suffering and self-sacrifice. All great boons come to us through the power of the immortal spirit we have within us, and that spirit only proves itself by its defiance of danger and loss.

LONDON, *August 1st, 1920*

We live on the topmost floor of this house far away from the surging life of the town. Only the crest of the swell of the London street-noise reaches me, gently undulating like those clustering tree-tops of Kensington Gardens that I watch from my window. The long and persistent spell of bad weather seems to have exhausted its spite, and the mellow light of the morning sun from behind the fleecy clouds is greeting me like the smile of a child whose eyes are still heavy with sleep. It is nearly seven o'clock, and every one of our party, including Pearson, is fast asleep within shut doors and behind drawn blinds. To-day is our last day in London, and I am not sorry to leave it. I wish it were the day for sailing home, but that day looks hazily distant and my heart aches.

LONDON, *August 4th, 1920*

Owing to a change of plans, we are still detained in London. We hope to leave it the day after to-morrow. Now that people believe that we are away, and since your London weather has ceased to persecute me, these last two days have been very restful for me. I wonder if you know that at the last moment we decided not to start on our tour to Norway, though our tickets were bought. I am sure you are ready to ascribe this to the inconstancy of mind!

P.S.—I have just written this about Dr Geddes:

What so strongly attracted me in Dr Patrick Geddes when I came to know him in India was not his scientific achievement but, on the contrary, the rare fact of the fullness of his personality rising far above his science. Whatever he has studied and mastered has become vitally one with his humanity. He has the precision of the scientist, and at the same time the vision of the prophet. He has also the power of an artist to make his ideas visible through the language of symbol. His love of man has given him the insight to see the truth of man and imagination to realize in the world not merely the mechanical aspect but also the infinite mystery of life.

PARIS, *August 13th, 1920*

I have come to Paris, not stay here, but to decide where to go. The sun is shining bright and the spirit of exhilaration is in the atmosphere. Sudhir Rudra received me at the station and made all arrangements for us. Pearson has gone to stay with his mother for some weeks before we start for America. Therefore I am in the hands of Sudhir just at present and he is taking proper care of me. Paris is empty, and there is no chance of our meeting the people whom I should like to meet. Our stay in England has been wasted. Your Parliament debates about Dyerism in the Punjab and other symptoms of an arrogant spirit of contempt and callousness about India have deeply grieved me, and it was with a feeling of relief that I left England.

NEAR PARIS, *August 20th, 1920*

We are in a delightful country, in a delightful place in France, meeting with people who are so human.

I feel clearly that the ultimate reality for man's life is his life in the world

of ideas, where he is emancipated from the gravitational pull of the dust and he realizes that he is spirit. We, in India, live in a narrow cage of petty interests; we do not believe that we have wings, for we have lost our sky; we chatter and hop and peck at one another within the small range of our obstructed opportunities. It is difficult to achieve greatness of mind and character where our responsibility is diminutive and fragmentary, where our whole life occupies and affects an extremely limited area.

And yet through the cracks and chinks of our walls are must send out our starved branches to the sunlight and air, and the roots of our life must pierce the upper strata of our soil of desert sands till they reach down to the spring of water which is exhaustless. Our most difficult problem is how to gain our freedom of soul in spite of the cramped condition of our outward circumstances; how to ignore the perpetual insult of our destiny, so as to be able to uphold the dignity of man.

Santiniketan is for this *tapasya* of India. We who have come there often forget the greatness of our mission, mostly because of the obscurity and insignificance with which the humanity of India seems to be obliterated. We have not the proper light and perspective in our surroundings to be able to realize that our soul is great; and therefore we behave as if we were doomed to be small for all time.

ARDENNES, *August 21st, 1920*

Here we are in a most beautiful part of France. But of what avail is the beauty of Nature when you have lost your trunks which contained all your clothes? I could have been in perfect sympathy with the trees surrounding me if, like them, I were not dependent upon tailors for maintaining self-respect. The most important event for me in this world at present is not what is happening in Poland, or Ireland, or Mesopotamia, but the fact that all the trunks belonging to our party have disappeared from the goods-van in their transit from Paris to this place!

And therefore, though the sea is singing its hymns to the rising and setting sun and to the starlit silence of the night, and though the forest round me is standing tiptoe on the rock, like an ancient Druid, raising its arms to the sky, chanting its incantation of primeval life, we have to hasten back to Paris to be restored to respectability at the hands of tailors and washermen!

I have just received your letter, and for some time I have felt myself held tight in the bosom of our Asram. I cannot tell you how I feel about the prolonged separation from it which is before me; but at the same time I know that unless my relationship with the wide world of humanity grows in truth and love, my relationship with the Asram will not be perfect.

PARIS, *September 7th, 1920*

Your letters always bring the atmosphere of Santiniketan round my mind, with all its colour and sounds and movements; and my love for my boys, like a migratory bird, crosses back over the sea, seeking its own dear nest in the Asram. Your letters are great gifts to me—I have not the power to repay them

in kind. For now my mind faces the West, and all that it has to give naturally flows towards it. Therefore, for the time being, my direct communication with you has become thin, like the stream of the Kopai River in the summer. But I know Santiniketan will not bring forth its fullness of flower and fruit if, through me, it does not send its roots into the Western soil. Stung by the insult of cruel injustice, we try to repudiate Europe, but by doing so we insult ourselves. Let us have the dignity not to quarrel or retaliate; not to pay back smallness by being small ourselves. This is the time when we should dedicate all our resources of emotion, thought and character to the service of our country in a positive direction of duty. We are suffering because of our offences against Shivam, against Advaitam. We spend all our energy in quarrelling with the punishment and nothing of it is left for the reparation of wrongs we have done and are doing. When we have performed our part of the duties, we shall have the fullest right and power and time to bring others to book for their transgressions.

Let us forget the Punjab affairs—but never forget that we shall go on deserving such humiliation over and over again until we set our house in order. Do not mind the waves of the sea, but mind the leaks in your vessel. Politics in our country is extremely petty. It has a pair of legs, one of which has shrunk and shrivelled and become paralytic and therefore feebly waits for the other one to drag it on. There is no harmony between the two, and our politics, in its hoppings and totterings and falls, is comic and undignified. The entreaty and anger, which alternately are struggling to find expression in the ludicrously lame member of this tragic partnership, both belong to our abject feebleness. When Non-co-operation comes naturally as our final moral protest against the unnaturalness of our political situation, then it will be glorious, because true; but when it is only another form of begging, then let us reject it.

The establishment of perfect co-operation of life and mind among ourselves must come first through sacrifice and self-dedication, and then will come in its natural course the non-cooperation. When the fruit completely ripens, it finds its freedom through its own fulfilment of truth.

Our country is crying to her own children for their co-operation in the removal of obstacles in our social life which for centuries have been hampering us in our self-realization. We need co-operation in the sacrifice of love, more than anything else, to prove to our country that she is ours; and then we shall have the moral right to say to others: 'we have nothing to do with you in our affairs.' And for this, all the moral fervour which the life of Mahatma Gandhi represents, and which he, of all men in the world, can call up, is needed.

That such a precious treasure of power should be put into the mean and frail vessel of our politics, allowing it to sail across endless waves of angry recrimination, is terribly unfortunate for our country, when our mission is to revive the dead with the fire of the soul. The external waste of our resources of life is great owing to external circumstances; but that the waste of our spiritual resources should also be allowed to happen on adventures that are

wrong from the point of view of moral truth is heartbreaking. It is criminal to turn moral force into a blind force.

Our time to go to Holland is drawing near. I have numerous invitations from over there to lecture, but I am not yet fully ready. Just now I am busy writing. My subject is the Meeting of the East and West. I hope it will be finished before I leave Paris.

PARIS, *September 12th, 1920*

I had invitations from Germany and decided to go. But travelling from one country to another has become so difficult nowadays that I had to give it up. Specially, going from France to Germany is beset with obstacles. On my way back from Holland, I shall try my best at least to visit Hamburg. Germany needs sympathy, and I hope I shall have the opportunity to go there and offer it to her.

A short time ago I was taken to Rheims and other devastated regions of France in a motor-car. It was a most saddening sight. It will take a tremendous effort and also an immense lapse of time to make this a thing of the past. When the spiritual ideal is lost, when the human relationship is completely broken up, then individuals freed from the creative bond of wholeness find a fearful joy in destruction.

In such catastrophes, one can realize what a stupendous force of annihilation is not only kept in check in our society, but made into multitudinous manifestations of beauty and fruitfulness. Then we know that evils are like meteors, stray fragments, wreckage of a broken-up wholeness, which need the attraction of a great planet of life's ideal to be assimilated into the peace of creation.

Only spiritual ideals have that great power of attraction that can transmute these rebellious fractions into a perfect roundness. The evil forces are literally outlaws. They only need the control and cadence of creative laws to change them into good. Our Shiva[1] is the Lord of terrible spirits, who are spirits of death; and he is also Shivam, the Good. True goodness lies not in the negation of badness, but in the mastery of it. It is the miracle that turns the tumult of chaos into the dance of beauty. True education is that power of miracle, that ideal of creation. Punishments and disciplines imposed from outside are negative. The Teacher is Shiva. He has the divine power of destroying the destructiveness; of sucking out the poison. If France had the Shiva in her heart, she could transform evil into good, she could forgive. And that forgiveness could prove her own immortality, and truly save her from the hurt which was inflicted upon her.

This is difficult, but it is the one way of salvation. Only the creative ideal can completely get over the acts of destruction. It is the spiritual ideal, it is love,

[1] The God Shiva in Indian mythology is regarded as the Lord of Terrors. But the name 'Shivam' indicates beneficence; and thus Shiva is also the God of Goodness. He swallows the deadly poison without harm.

it is forgiveness. God is perpetually exercising it, and thus the creation is ever kept sweet.

In the heart of death, life has its ceaseless play of joy.

Do we not know this in our individual life? Have we our own right to exist in this wonderful world? Would we not burn it, destroy it? Has not God's creative power given us our place in His universe? Must we forget that, when we judge and deal with our own fellow-beings?

PARIS, *September 18th, 1920*

I find our countrymen are furiously excited about Non-co-operation. It will grow into something like our Swadeshi movement in Bengal. Such an emotional outbreak should have been taken advantage of in starting independent organizations all over India for serving our country.

Let Mahatma Gandhi be the true leader in this; let him send his call for positive service, ask for homage in sacrifice, which has its end in love and creation. I shall be willing to sit at his feet and do his bidding if he commands me to co-operate with my countrymen in service and love. I refuse to waste my manhood in lighting fires of anger and spreading it from house to house.

It is not that I do not feel anger in my heart for injustice and insult heaped upon my motherland. But this anger of mine should be turned into the fire of love for lighting the lamp of worship to be dedicated through my country to my God.

It would be an insult to humanity if I use the sacred energy of my moral indignation for the purpose of spreading a blind passion all over my country. It would be like using the fire from the altar of sacrifice for the purpose of incendiarism.

ANTWERP, *October, 3rd, 1920*

I have spent about a fortnight in Holland. This fortnight has been most generous in its gifts to me. Of one thing you may be sure, that a communication of heart has been opened up between this little country and Santiniketan; and it remains with us to widen it and make use of it for the interchange of spiritual wealth. Altogether, Europe has come closer to us by this visit of ours. I only wish that all my friends in Santiniketan could realize how true this is and what a wealth it represents. Now I know more clearly than ever before that Santiniketan belongs to the world and we have to be worthy of this great fact. It is extremely difficult for us Indians to forget all the irritations that ever keep our consciousness concentrated on our own daily annoyances. But emancipation of consciousness is both the means and end of spiritual life. Therefore Santiniketan must be saved from the whirlwind of our dusty politics.

I am writing this letter from Antwerp, where I came yesterday morning; and I am getting ready to go to Brussels, where I have an invitation. And then I go to Paris.

LONDON, *October 18th, 1920*

Our vision of truth varies according to its perspective. I feel certain that this perspective has become narrow in India owing to the density of mental

atmosphere caused by political unrest. There are politicians who must make hasty decisions and act without delay. It is their function to take short cuts to immediate success and dash through blunders with their lumbering 'tanks' of political organizations. But there are needs that belong to all mankind and to all time. Those have to be satisfied through the rise and fall of empires. We all know that there is a vast difference between journalism and literature. Journalism is necessary and there are multitudes of men eager to carry it out. But if it suppresses the light of literature, then it will produce the London fog of November, which substitutes gaslight for the sunlight.

Santiniketan is there for giving expression to the Eternal Man—*asato ma sad gamaya*,[1] the prayer that will ring clearer as the ages roll on, even when the geographical names of all countries are changed and lose their meaning. If I give way to the passion of the moment and the claims of the crowd, then it will be like speculating with my Master's money for a purpose which is not His own.

I know that my countrymen will clamour to borrow from this capital entrusted to me and exploit it for the needs that they believe to be more urgent than anything else. But all the same, you must know that I have to be true to my trust. Santiniketan must treasure in all circumstances that *santi* which is in the bosom of the Infinite. With begging and scrambling we find very little, but with being true to ourselves we find a great deal more than we desire. The best reward that I have gained in my life is through the spontaneous and disinterested expression of truth in me, and never through straining for a result, whatever high-sounding name it may have carried.

[1] Literally, 'Lead me from Untruth to Truth.'

CHAPTER VI

THE JOURNEY undertaken to America, described in the letters contained in this chapter, was directly for the purpose of obtaining sympathy and support for the Poet's Visva-bharati ideal. His earlier visits to America in 1913 and 1916 had given him the hope that the young heart of the New World would respond to him more definitely than the peoples of Europe, who were still involved in their national prejudices and their narrow provincial boundaries.

Since the Poet's conception of Visva-bharati lies in the background in all the letters which he wrote to me from America, it may be well as an introduction to this chapter to give his own explanation of his purpose, as he presented it during his lecture tours in India before he started for the West. The following passages from these lectures appear to me to explain the Poet best:

> The age has come when all artificial fences are breaking down. Only that will survive which is basically consistent with the universal; while that which seeks safety in the out-of-the-way hole of the special will perish. The nursery of the infant should be secluded, its cradle safe. But the same seclusion, if continued after the infant has grown up, makes it weak in mind and body.
>
> There was a time when China, Egypt, Greece and Rome had, each of them, to nurture its civilization in comparative seclusion. The greatness of the universal, however, which was more or less in each, grew strong within its protecting sheath of individuality. Now has come the age for co-ordination and co-operation. The seedlings that were reared within their enclosures must now be transplanted into the open fields. They must pass the test of the world-market if their maximum value is to be obtained.
>
> So we must prepare the grand field for the co-ordination of all the cultures of the world, where each will give to and take from the other; where each will have to be studied through the growth of its stages in history. This adjustment of knowledge through comparative study, this progress in intellectual co-operation, is to be the key-note of the coming age. We may hug our holy aloofness from some imagined security of a corner, but the world will prove stronger than our corner, and it is our corner that will have to give way, receding and pressing against its walls till they burst on all sides.
>
> But before we in India are in a position to stand a comparison with the other cultures of the world, or truly to co-operate with them, we must base our structure on a synthesis of all the different cultures we have. When taking our stand at such a centre we turn towards the West, our gaze shall no longer be timid and dazed; our heads shall remain erect, safe from insult. For then we shall be able to take our own views of truth

from the standpoint of our own vantage-ground, thus opening out a new vista of thought before a grateful world.

All great countries have their vital centres for intellectual life, where a high standard of learning is maintained, where the minds of the people are naturally attracted to find their genial atmosphere, to prove their worth, to contribute their share to the country's culture, and thus to kindle on some common altar of the land a great sacrificial fire of intellect which may radiate the sacred light in all directions.

Athens was such a centre in Greece, Rome in Italy, and Paris is such to-day in France. Benares has been, and still continues to be, the centre of our Sanskrit culture. But Sanskrit learning does not exhaust all the elements of culture that exist in the present-day India.... That is why the inner spirit of India is calling to us to establish in this land great centres, where all her intellectual forces will gather for the purpose of creation, and all her resources of knowledge and thought, Eastern and Western, will unite in perfect harmony. She is seeking for the glorious opportunity to know her own mind and give her mind to the world, to help it in its progress; when she will be released from the chaos of scattered powers and the inertness of borrowed acquisitions.

Let me state clearly that I have no distrust of any culture because of its foreign character. On the contrary, I believe that the shock of such forces is necessary for the vitality of our intellectual nature. It is admitted that much of the spirit of Christianity runs counter, not only to the Classical culture of Europe, but to the European temperament altogether. And yet this alien movement of idea, constantly running against the natural mental current of Europe, has been the most important factor in strengthening and enriching her civilization on account of the very antagonism of its direction. In fact, the European vernaculars first woke up to life and fruitful vigour owing to the impact of this foreign thought-power with all its Oriental forms and feelings. The same thing is happening in India. European culture has come to us, not only with its knowledge, but with its velocity. Though our assimilation of it is imperfect and the consequent aberrations numerous, still it is rousing our intellectual life from its inertia of former habits into growing consciousness by the very contradiction it offers to our mental traditions.

What I object to is the artificial arrangement by which this foreign education tends to occupy all the space of our national mind and thus kills, or hampers, the great opportunity for the creation of a new thought-power by a new combination of truths. It is this which makes me urge that all the elements in our own culture have to be strengthened, not to resist Western culture, but truly to accept and assimilate it; to use it for our food and not as our burden; to get mastery over this culture, and not to live at its outskirts as the hewers of texts and the drawers of book-learning.

Rabindranath Tagore suffered from illness during his visit to America, and this brought with it depression of mind. The response to his appeal for co-

operation in his work of international fellowship was not at first as direct and full as he had expected. His longing to go back became at last intense. The letters which he wrote to me during these months were often full of gloom. Those that follow are some of the most important of them dealing with his ideal of a centre of international fellowship at Santiniketan.

NEW YORK, *October 28th, 1920*

Our steamer has arrived in port—too late for us to land to-night. Between one shore and the other there are tossings on the angry waves and menaces of the shrieking winds, but peace comes at the end and shelter when the desolation that divides the world appears unreal and is forgotten. This crossing of the sea has not yet been completed by those who are voyagers from one age to another. Storms have raged and the moaning of the salt sea has haunted their days and nights. But the haven is not very far distant and the new continent of time is ready with its greeting of light and life and its invitation to the unexplored. Already I feel the breath of that future and see birds from the shore bringing songs of hope.

You must know that our Santiniketan belongs to that future. We have not yet reached it. We need stronger faith and clearer vision to direct our course towards its hill of sunlight. There are chains which still keep our boat clinging to the sheltered cove of the past. We must leave it behind. Our loyalty must not be for any land of a limited geography. It should be for the nationality of the common idea, to which are born individuals belonging to various nations, who are carrying their gifts of sacrifice to the one great shrine of Humanity.

NEW YORK, *November 4th, 1920*

There is one thing about which I wish to speak to you. Keep Santiniketan away from the turmoils of politics. I know that the political problem is growing in intensity in India and its encroachment is difficult to resist. But all the same, we must never forget that our mission is not political. Where I have my politics, I do not belong to Santiniketan.

I do not mean to say that there is anything wrong in politics, but only that it is out of harmony with our Asram.

We must clearly realize this fact, that the name of Santiniketan has a meaning for us, and this name will have to be made true. I am anxious and afraid lest the surrounding forces may become too strong for us and we succumb to the onslaught of the present time. Because the time is troubled and the minds of men distracted, all the more must we, through our Asram, maintain our faith in Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam.

NEW YORK, *November 25th, 1920*

A friend of mine, who is actively interested in my cause, is a Quaker, and he takes me every Sunday morning to the Quakers' meetings. There, in the silence of meditation, I am able to find the eternal perspective of truth, where the vision of outward success dwindles away to its infinitesimal minuteness.

What is needed of me is sacrifice. Our payment is for success, but our sacrifice is for truth. If the spirit of sacrifice is pure in quality, then its reward will be more than can be counted and proved, and let my gift to my country and to the world be a life of sacrifice.

But my earnest request to you is to keep your mind high above politics. The problem of this new age is to help to build the world anew. Let us accept this great task. Santiniketan is to make accommodation for the workers from all parts of the world. All other things can wait. We must make room for Man, the guest of this age, and let not the Nation obstruct his path. I am afraid lest the cry of our own sufferings and humiliations should drown the announcement of His coming. For His sake we shall set aside our grievances and shall say: 'Whatever may happen to us, let His cause triumph; for the future is His.'

NEW YORK, *November 30th, 1920*

I am often reminded of my *Gitanjali* poem in which the woman tells how she found God's sword when she had been seeking for a petal from God's flower-garden. All through my life I have been seeking for such a petal, and I stand puzzled at the sight of the gift waiting for me. This gift has not been my choice, but my God has chosen for me this gift. And now I say to myself that we prove our worthiness for God's gift of responsibility by acceptance of it and not by success or anything else.

The past has been for men, the future is for Man. These *men* are still fighting for the possession of the world: the din and the clash are deafening; the air is obscured with the dust rising from the trampled earth. Standing in the heart of this struggle, we have to build a seat for the one God revealed to all human races. We may be mocked and pushed away by the crowd, but the fact will remain and invisibly grow into truth that we have believed.

I was born a poet, and it is difficult for me to suffer myself to be rudely hustled in my path by busy men who have no leisure for ideas. I am not an athlete. I do not belong to the arena. The stare of the curious crowd scorches my soul. And yet I, of all persons, am called upon to force my way into the thick of the Western public with a mission for which I have never been trained. Truth fashions its own arrows out of reeds that are light and frail.

NEW YORK, *December 13th, 1920*

Our Seventh Paus Festival at the Asram is near at hand. I cannot tell you how my heart is thirsting to join you in your festival. I am trying to console myself with the thought that something very big and great is going to be the outcome of the effort I am making. But deep in my heart I know that simplicity of life and endeavour makes for real happiness. When we realize in some measure our ideal of perfection in our work, it matters very little what its dimensions are. Our trust in bigness very often betrays our want of faith in truth. The kingdom of the earth boasts of the magnitude of its possessions, but the Kingdom of Heaven is content with the depth of its self-realization. There are certain institutions which have for their object some external success. But

Santiniketan is there for giving us opportunity to realize ourselves in truth. This can never be done through big funds, but through dedication of our life in love.

In this country I live in the dungeon of the Castle of Bigness. My heart is starved. Day and night I dream of Santiniketan, which blossoms like a flower in the atmosphere of the unbounded freedom of simplicity. I know how truly great Santiniketan is, when I view it from this land. Here I feel every day what a terrible nightmare it is for the human soul to bear this burden of the monster Arithmetic. It incessantly drives it victims and yet leads them nowhere. It raises storms of battle which are for sowing broadcast the seeds of future conflict.

The giant reptiles of the primitive earth were proud of their hypertrophied tails, which did not save them from the doom of destruction. I long to leave all this, totally reject this unreality, take the next steamer I can get, and run back to my Santiniketan and serve it with my life and love.

That life which I dedicate to it, if it is true, will make it live. The true wisdom is there, which can spurn the greed for result and is only concerned with the expression of truth. This wisdom found its utterance in India. But there is imminent danger of its being drowned in the flood of noise which the votaries of success are bellowing forth in the prosperous West. My prayer is growing every day more and more intense, to get away from the dark tower of unreality, from this dance of death trampling sweet flowers of life under its tread.

NEW YORK, *December 17th, 1920*

When all my thoughts were furiously revolving, like dead leaves, in a whirlwind of desire for raising funds, a picture came to my hand; it was that of Sujata offering a cup of milk to Buddha. Its message went deep into my heart. It said to me: 'The cup of milk comes to you unasked when you have gone through your *tapasya*. It is offered to you with love, and only love can bring its homage to truth.'

Then your figure at once came to my mind. The milk has been sent to me through you. It is infinitely more than anything that can come from the cheque-book of the rich. I had become famished in the wilderness of solitude for lack of sympathy and comradeship, when you brought your cup of love to me, which is the true life-giving food freely offered by life. And as the poet Morris says, 'Love is enough.' That voice of love calls me away from the lure of dollars—the voice that comes to nestle in my heart from across the sea, from the shady avenue of *sal* trees resonant with laughter and songs of simple joy.

The mischief is that ambition does not fully believe in love. It believes in power. It leaves the limpid and singing water of everlasting life for the wine of success. Every day I seem to be growing afraid of the very vision of this success. It had been said in the Upanishad, 'Happiness is in greatness.' Ambition points out bigness and calls it greatness, and our track is hopelessly lost. When I look at the picture of Buddha, I cry for the great peace of inner fulfilment. My longing grows painfully intense as my mind becomes distracted at the stupendous unmeaningness of monstrosity in things around me. Every morning

I sit by my window and say to myself: 'I must not bow my head to this ugly idol worshipped by the West with daily human sacrifice.' I remember that morning at Shileida when the Vaishnava woman came to me and said: 'When are you coming down from your three-storied building to meet your love under the shade of the trees?'

Just now, I am on the top storey of the skyscraper to which the tallest of trees dare not send its whisper; but love silently comes to me saying: 'When are you coming down to meet me on the green grass under the rustling leaves, where you have the freedom of the sky and of sunlight and the tender touch of life's simplicity?' I try to say something about money, but it sounds so ludicrous and yet so tragic, that my words grow ashamed of themselves and they stop.

NEW YORK, *December 19th, 1920*

When Life began her first experiments, she was mightily proud of the hugeness of her animal specimens. The bigger the bodies were, the more extravagantly large the armour had to be made for their protection. The ludicrous creatures,, in order to maintain their balance, had to carry a tail which was absurdly disproportionate to the rest of their bodies. It went on like this till life became a burden to itself and to the exchequer of creation. It was uneconomical, and therefore not only harmful but ungainly. True economy is the principle of beauty in practical arithmetic. Driven to bewilderment, life began to seek for a pause in her insanity of endless multiplication.

All forms of ambitious powers are obsessed by this delirium of multiplication. All its steps are steps towards augmentation and not completeness. But ambitions, that rely solely upon the suggestion of their tails and armour, are condemned to carry their own obstruction till they have to stop.

In its early history, Life, after its orgies of megalomania, had at last to think of disarmament. But how did she effect it? By boldly relinquishing the ambition to produce bigness—and man was born helplessly naked and small. All of a sudden he was disinherited of the enormity of flesh, when apparently he was most in need of it. But this prodigious loss gained for him his freedom and victory.

Then began the reign of Mind. It brought its predecessor of gigantic bulk under subjection. But, as often happens, the master became the parasite of the slave, and mind also tried to achieve greatness by the bigness of materials. The dynasty of mind followed the dynasty of flesh, but employed this flesh as its prime minister.

Our history is waiting for the dynasty of Spirit. The human succeeded the brutal; and now comes the turn of the Divine.

In our mythology we have often heard of a man taking the side of the Gods and saving Paradise from the dominion of Giants. But in our history we often notice man holding alliance with Giants and trying to defeat the Gods. His guns and ships of huge power and proportion are turned out from the arsenal of the Giant. In the fight of bigness against goodness, man has joined

the former, counting the coins of his reward in number and not in quality—in lead and not in gold.

Those who are in possession of material resources have become slaves of their own instruments. Fortunately for us, in India, these resources are beyond all immediate possibility of realization. We are disarmed, and therefore we have no option but to seek for other and higher sources of power. The men who believe in the reality of brute force have made enormous sacrifices in order to maintain it. Let us, in India, have faith in the moral power in man and be ready to sacrifice for it all we have. Let us do our best to prove that Man has not been the greatest mistake in Creation. Let it not be said that, for the sake of peace and happiness in the world, the physical brutes were preferable to the intellectual brutes who boast of their factory-made teeth and nails and poison fangs.

NEW YORK, *December 20th, 1920*

In every age and in every country facts are given to us in order that we may provide with them some special expression of Truth. Facts are like atoms in gases: they fight with, or else fly away from, one another. But when they are united into a drop of dew they attain beauty and reality. Man must have that creative magic to bring the facts of his time into some unity of creation. In Christ and in Buddha this creative ideal tried to unite men who were divided because of their formalism in religious faith.

Formalism in religion is like nationalism in politics: it breeds sectarian arrogance, mutual misunderstanding and a spirit of persecution. Our Indian mediaeval saints, through their light of love and inner perception of truth, could realize the spiritual unity of man. For them, the innumerable barriers of formalism had no existence. Therefore the mutually antagonistic creeds of Hindus and Muhammadans, irreconcilable as they seemed, did not baffle them. Our faith in truth has its trial in the apparent difficulty of its realization.

The most important of all facts in the present age is that the East and West have met. So long as it remains a mere fact, it will give rise to interminable conflicts; it will even hurt man's soul. It is the mission of all men of faith to raise this fact into truth. The worldly-rise will shake their heads and say it is not possible—that there is a radical difference between the East and the West and that only physical power will have its sway in their relationship.

But physical power is not creative. Whatever laws and organizations it may produce, it will never satisfy spiritual humanity. Ram Mohun Roy was the first great man in our age who had the profound faith and large vision to feel in his heart the unity of soul between the East and West. I follow him, though he is practically rejected by my countrymen.

I only wish you had been with me in Europe! You would know at once what was the purpose of the modern age; what is the cry of man, which the politicians never hear. There were politicians in the courts of the Moghul Emperors. They have left nothing behind them but ruins. But Kabir and Nanak! They have bequeathed to us their imperishable faith in the unity of man through God's love.

NEW YORK, *December 21st, 1920*

All about me is a desert of crowds, a monotony of multitude. Man is drowned in his own deluge of desultoriness. It is an unceasing struggle in me to have to pass through this—especially when I carry in myself such a heavy load of helplessness. Every moment I am made conscious of it, and I am tired. When we have the banner of an idea to carry against obstacles of indifference, the burden of our personal self should be extremely light. But I am so awkwardly cumbersome with my ineptitude.

I remember, when I was young, how a blind old beggar used to come to our door every morning led by a boy. It was a tragic sight; the blindness of the old man robbed the boy of his freedom. The boy looked so wistful and eager for release. Our incapacity is a fetter with which we tie others to our limitations. Consciousness of this, every day adds to my feeling of weariness. But this depression of spirit is likely to do me a service. It has led me to the brink of a discovery that a great measure of one's impotence is *maya*.

Latterly I have been constantly giving myself a shaking, trying to arouse myself from this stupor of self-delusion. During the greater part of my life my mind has been made accustomed to travel the inner paths of dreams, till it has lost all confidence in its power to thread its way through the zigzags of the outer world. In fact, its attention has never been trained to accept the miscellaneous responsibilities of the clamorous surface life of society. Therefore the West is not my world.

And yet I have received the gift of love from the West, and my heart acknowledges her claims to my service and I must unreservedly offer myself to her before I die. I do not belong to the present age, the age of conflicting politics. Nevertheless I cannot repudiate the age which has given me birth. I suffer and struggle. I crave for freedom and yet am held back. I must share the life of the present world, though I do not believe in its cry. I sit at its table, and while it fills its cup with wine to slake its unnatural thirst, I try to listen, through the noisy carousal, to the murmur of the stream carrying its limpid waters to the sea.

NEW YORK, *December 22nd, 1920*

To-day is the seventh of Paus. I wish it were allowed to me to stand among you and mingle my voice with yours in uttering our prayer. It is real starvation of my heart to be deprived of this great privilege. To-day I realize more than ever before that nothing can be truer for me than to be with my dear children and friends, this beautiful sunny morning of December, and bow my head to my Father and dedicate my service to Him. By that dedication our works become great, and not by extension of external resources.

Oh, how simple is truth and how full of light and happiness! Not to be distracted by the curiosity of crowds, only to be rewarded by the approval of Him who knows our heart, in the fulfilment of our endeavour. I only hope that what I am doing here is in response to the call of the Shantam, that my lonely celebration of seventh Paus in this hotel room finds its harmony with your

festival. Let our faith in the real be not overcome by the lure of the unreal. Let come to us what is good and not what we desire. Let us bow our heads to the Good, to the supreme Good.[1]

I have often felt the desire that you were with me in my adventure. And yet I am deeply thankful that you could remain at the Asram while I was away. For you understand me with the understanding of love, and therefore through you I seem to dwell in Santiniketan. I know that I am in your mind to-day and you know that my heart is with you. Is it not a great good fortune that there is a spot in this world where all that is best in us can meet in truth and love? Can anything be greater than that? Please give my blessings to all my boys and girls, and my greetings of love to my friends.

NEAR NEW YORK, *December 25th, 1920*

To-day is Christmas Day. We are about forty-five guests gathered in this inn from different parts of the United States. It is a beautiful house, nestling in the heart of a wooded hill, with an invitation floating in the air of a brook broadening into a lake in the valley. It is a glorious morning, full of peace and sunlight, of the silence of the leafless forest untouched by bird songs or humming of bees.

But where is the spirit of Christmas in human hearts? The men and women are feeding themselves with extra dishes and laughing extra loud. But there is not the least touch of the eternal in the heart of their merriment, no luminous serenity of joy, no depth of devotion. How immensely different from the religious festivals of our country! These Western people have made their money but killed their poetry of life. Here life is like a river, that has heaped up gravel and sand and choked the perennial current of water that flows from an eternal source on the snowy height of an ancient hill. I have learnt since I came here to prize more than ever the infinite worth of the frugal life and simple faith. These Western people believe in their wealth, which can only multiply itself and attain nothing.

How to convince them of the utter vanity of their pursuits! They do not have the time to realize that they are not happy. They try to smother their leisure with rubbish of dissipation, lest they discover that they are the unhappiest of mortals. They deceive their souls with counterfeits, and then, in order to hide that fact from themselves, they artificially keep up the value of those false coins by an unceasing series of self-deceptions.

My heart feels like a wild-duck from the Himalayan lake lost in the endless desert of Sahara, where sands glitter with a fatal brilliance but the soul withers for want of the life-giving spring of water.

NEW YORK, *January 8th, 1921*

There are a large number of ideas about which we do not even know that they are inaccessible to us, only because we have grown too familiar with their names.

[1] These sentences are a free translation of the prayer repeated together in the *mandir* (or chapel) at Santiniketan.

Such is our idea of God. We do not have to realize it in order to be made aware of it. This is why it requires a great deal of spiritual sensitiveness to be able to feel the life-throb of God's reality behind the vulgar callosity of words. Things that are small naturally come to their limits for us, when they are familiar. But the truth which is great should reveal its infinity all the more vastly when it is near to us. Unfortunately, words that represent truth have not the same immensity of life as truth itself. Therefore the words (and with them our attention and interest) become inert by constant handling, obscuring our faith underneath them without our being conscious of that tragic fact.

This is the reason why men who are obviously religious are frequently more irreligious, in reality, than those who openly ignore religion. Preachers and ministers of religion have made it their business to deal with God at every moment. They cannot afford to wait until they come in touch with Him. They dare not acknowledge the fact that they have not done so. Therefore they have to strain their minds into a constant attitude of God-Knowingness. They have to delude themselves, in order to fulfil the expectations of others, or what they consider to be their duty.

And yet the consciousness of God, like that of all other ideas, comes to us only with intense moments of illumination, of inspiration. If we do not have the patience to wait for it, we only choke the path of inspiration with the *débris* of our conscious efforts. Those who make it their business to preach God, preach creeds. They lose their sense of distinction between these two. Therefore their religion does not bring peace into this world, but conflict. They do not hesitate to make use even of their religion for the propaganda of national self-seeking and boastfulness.

You may wonder, in your mind, as to the reason of my bringing up this topic in my present letter. It is in connection with the same endless conflict within me between the poet and the preacher, one of whom depends for his mission upon inspiration and the other upon conscious endeavour. Straining of consciousness leads to insensitiveness, of which I am more afraid than anything else. The preacher is the professional dealer in particular ideas. His customers come at all hours of the day and put questions to him. The answers, which he gets into the habit of producing, gradually lose their living quality, and his faith in his ideas runs the risk of being smothered under the deadness of his words. I believe that such a tragedy is more common than people suspect, especially with those who are good and therefore are ever ready to sign their cheque of benefit for others without waiting to see if the cash has had time to accumulate in the bank.

This makes me think that it is safe to be nothing better than a mere poet. For poets have to be true to their best moments and not to other peoples' requirements.

NEW YORK, *January 14th, 1921*

Even when I was very young my mind ever sought for all experiences in an environment of completeness. That is to say, fact indicated some truth to

me, even though I did not clearly understand it. That is why my mind was constantly struck with things that in themselves were commonplace.

When I watched, from over the wall of the terrace of the inner apartments of our Jorashanko house, the coconut-trees and the tank surrounded by the huts of the milk vendors, they came before me with a more-than-themness that could not be exhausted. That faculty—though subsequently mingled with reasoning and self-analysis—has still continued in my life. It is the sense and craving for wholeness. Constantly it has been the cause of my separation from others and also their misunderstanding of my motives.

Swadeshi, Swarajism, ordinarily produce intense excitement in the minds of my countrymen, because they carry in them some fervour of passion generated by the exclusiveness of their range. It cannot be said that I am untouched by this heat and movement. But somehow, by my temperament as a poet, I am incapable of accepting these objects as final. They claim from us a great deal more than is their due. After a certain point is reached, I find myself obliged to separate myself from my own people, with whom I have been working, and my soul cries out: 'The complete man must never be sacrificed to the patriotic man, or even to the merely moral man.'

To me humanity is rich and large and many-sided. Therefore I feel deeply hurt when I find that, for some material gain, man's personality is mutilated in the Western world and he is reduced to a machine.

The same process of repression and curtailment of humanity is often advocated in our country under the name of patriotism. Such deliberate impoverishment of our nature seems to me a crime. It is a cultivation of callousness, which is a form of sacrilege. For God's purpose is to lead man into perfection of growth, which is the attainment of a unity comprehending an immense manifoldness. But when I find man, for some purpose of his own, imposing upon his society a mutilation of mind, a niggardliness of culture, a puritanism which is spiritual penury, it makes me inexpressibly sad.

I have been reading a book by a Frenchman on Japan. The sensitiveness to the ideal of beauty, which has been made universal in Japan, is not only the source of her strength, but of her heroic spirit of renunciation. For true renunciation blossoms on the vigorous soil of beauty and joy—the soil which supplies positive food to our souls.

But the negative process of making the soil poor produces a ghastly form of renunciation which belongs to the nihilism of life. An emancipation of human nature has already been going on for a long time in India. Let us not add to it by creating a mania for self-immolation. Our life to-day needs more colour, more expansion, more nourishment, for all the variety of its famished functions. Whatever may be the case in other countries, we need in India more fullness of life, and not asceticism.

Deadness of life, in all forms, gives rise to impurities, by enfeebling our reason, narrowing our vision, creating fanaticism, owing to our will-power being forced into abnormal channels. Life carries its own purification when its sap finds the passage unbarred through all ramifications.

NEW YORK, *January 23rd, 1921*

I have just come back from Greenwich, a suburban part of New York, where last night I had a reception and a speech and a dinner and a discussion, till I felt empty, like a burst balloon with no gas left in it!

At the far-distant end of the wilderness of such trials as this what do I see? But what matters it? Results of our efforts delude us by appearing as final. They raise expectation of fulfilment and draw us on. But they are not final. They are roadside inns where we change our horses for a farther journey. An ideal is different. It carries its own progress within itself. Each stage is not a mere approach to the goal, but carries with it its own meaning and purpose.

Trees proceed on their upward career, not along a railway track constructed by engineers. We, who have been dreamers, should never employ coolies to build railway lines of social service. We must solely deal with living ideas, and have faith in life. Otherwise we are punished, not necessarily with bankruptcy, but with success—behind which sits the Mephistopheles of worldliness, chuckling at the sight of an idealist dragged through the dust by the chariot of the prosperous.

What has made us love Santiniketan so deeply is the ideal of perfection, which we have tasted all through its growth. It has not been made by money, but by our love, our life. With it we need not strain for any result; it is fulfilment itself—the life which forms round it, the service which we daily render it. Now I realize, more than ever before, how precious and how beautiful is the simplicity of our Asram, which can reveal itself all the more luminously because of its background of material poverty and want.

NEW YORK, *February 2nd, 1921*

After a break of three weeks and a sultriness of weary waiting, your letters have come in a downpour; and I cannot possibly tell you how refreshing they are! I seem to be travelling across a desert, and your letters are like weekly provisions dropped by some air-service from cloud-land. They are expected; and yet they have the element of surprise. I hungrily attack them and fall upon extra portions supplied from your letters written to others.

Your letters are delightful, because you have your interest in details that are generally overlooked. The world is made beautiful by the unimportant things. They furnish this great world-picture with all its modulations of shades and tints. The important things are like the sunshine. They come from a great source. But the unimportant compose the atmosphere of our life. They scatter the sun's rays, break the atmosphere into colours, and coax it into tenderness.

You have asked for my permission to abolish the matriculation class from our school. Let it go. I have no tenderness for it. In our classical literature it was the strict rule to give all dramas a happy ending. Our matriculation class has ever been the fifth act in our Asram, ending in a tragedy. Let us drop the scene, before that disaster gathers its forest!

I am enclosing with this a translation, which runs thus:

WOMAN

The fight is ended.
Shrill cries of loss trouble the air,
The gains, soiled and shattered, are a burden too heavy to carry home.
Come, woman, bring thy breath of life.
Close all cracks with kisses of tender green,
Nurse the trampled dust into fruitfulness.

The morning wears on;
The stranger sits homeless by the roadside, playing on his reed.
Come, woman, bring thy magic of love!
Make infinite the corner between walls,
There to build a world for him,—
Thine eyes its stars, thy voice its music.

The gate-door creaks in the wind.
The time is for leave-taking at the day's end.
Come woman, bring thy tears!
Let thy tremulous touch call out its last lyric
From the moment of parting.
Let the shadow of thy sad gaze
Haunt the road across the hills.

The night deepens;
The house is empty; its loneliness aches with silence.
Come, woman, bring thy lamp of vigil!
Enter thy secret chamber of sorrow.
Make the dark hours quiver with the agony of thy prayer.
Till the day dawns in the East.

NEW YORK, *February 5th, 1921*

Civilization in the West is a magnifying glass. It makes the most ordinary things hugely big. Its buildings, business, amusements, are exaggerations. The spirit of the West loves it high-heeled boots, whose heels are much bigger than itself.

Since I came to this continent my arithmetic has become absurdly bloated. It refuses to be compressed within decent limits. But I can assure you that to carry such a burden even in my imagination is wearisome.

Yesterday some Santiniketan photographs came by chance into my hands. I felt as if I was suddenly wakened up from a Brobdingnagian nightmare. I say to myself, This is our Santiniketan. It is ours, because it is not manufactured by a machine. Truth is beautiful—like woman in our own country. She never strains to add to her inches by carrying extravagances under her feet. Happiness is not in success, not in bigness, but in truth.

What makes me feel so sad, in this country, is the fact that people here

do not know that they are not happy. They are proud, like the sandy desert, which is proud of its glitter. This Sahara is mightily big; but my mind turns its back upon it, and sings:

> I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
> And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
> Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
> And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

In the modern age, with all its facilities of communication, the access to Innisfree has become most difficult. Central Africa opens its secret to the inquisitive man, and also the North and South Pole—but the road to Innisfree lies in an eternal mystery.

Yet I belong to that 'Isle of Innisfree': its true name is Santiniketan. But when I leave it, and cross over to the western shore, I feel occasionally frightened lest I should lose my path back to it.

Oh! But how sweet is our *Sal* avenue, the breath of autumn in our *Shiuli* groves, the rainy evening resonant with music in Dinu's absurd little room!

> And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
> Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
> There midnight's all a glimmer and noon a purple glow,
> And evening full of the linnet's wings.

CHAPTER VII

DURING THE MONTHS of February and March 1921 the Non-co-operation movement reached its height in India. The appeal made to boycott the Government Schools and Colleges stirred the hearts of the students of Calcutta and some thousands of them came out. The atmosphere was electrical and the spirit of sacrifice was in the very air we breathed. My letters to the Poet were full of these things, and I myself was carried away in the enthusiasm of the moment. It is necessary to understand that the letters which the Poet wrote to me at this time were, in part at least, his own reaction to this news which reached him, week by week, from me. Gradually, as his health improved, his stay in America became brighter, and he wrote more cheerfully. He was specially delighted with his first visit to the Southern States, and deeply appreciated the warmth of heart he found among every class of people in those regions. With this very brief note of explanation, the letters that follow tell their own story and are easily intelligible.

On the voyage to Europe the Poet wrote, day after day, a separate letter to me. He did the same on his later journey from Europe to India and with some amusement gave me the whole series from his own letter-case on arrival at Santiniketan. This will account for the different letters written on board ship which are reproduced in this volume.

NEW YORK, *February 8th, 1921*

I have just read a letter published in *Prabasi* by one who is at the Asram, and it has deeply hurt me. This is the ugliest side of patriotism. For in small minds, patriotism dissociates itself from the higher ideal of humanity. It becomes the magnification of self, on a stupendous scale—magnifying our vulgarity, cruelty, greed; dethroning God, to put up this bloated self in its place.

The whole world is suffering from this cult of Devil-worship in the present age, and I cannot tell you how deeply I am suffering, being surrounded in this country by endless ceremonials of this hideously profane cult. Everywhere there is an antipathy against Asia vented by a widespread campaign of calumny. Negroes are burnt alive, sometimes merely because they tried to exercise their right to vote, given to them by law. Germans are reviled. Conditions in Russia are deliberately misrepresented. They are furiously busy building their towers of political civilization upon the quagmire of mob psychology, spreading over it a crust of deliberate lies. They have to subsist upon a continual supply of hatred, contempt, jealousy, and lies and lies!

I am afraid I shall be rejected by my own people when I go back to India. My solitary cell is awaiting me in my motherland. In their present state of mind, my countrymen will have no patience with me, who believe God to be higher than my country.

I know such spiritual faith may not lead us to political success, but I say to myself, as India has ever said: 'Even then—what?'

The more I live in this country the more I understand the true meaning of emancipation.

It is for India to keep her breast supplied with the *Amrita*[1] of wisdom, with which to feed the new-born age and nourish it into a mighty future.

The ideas to which politicians still cling belong to a past that is doomed. It is a wreck rushing towards annihilation. The West is beginning to have doubts about its shelter, but its habit of mind is preventing it from leaving the old shelter for a new one. But we unfortunate creatures are getting ready to jump into the stream and swim across to the sinking ship and fight for our place in its corner. Yet I know that our huts are safer than that doomed and drifting monster.

I long to live in the heart of Peace. I have done my work, and I hope that my Master will grant me leave to sit by Him, not to talk, but to listen to His own great silence.

HOUSTON, TEXAS, *February 23rd, 1921*

Tied to the chariot-wheel of Karma we flit from one birth to another. What that means to the individual soul I have been made to realize in these last few days. It is my tyrant Karma which is dragging me from one hotel to another. Between my two hotel incarnations I usually have my sleep in a Pullman car, the very name of which suggests the agency of death. I am ever dreaming of the day when I shall attain my Nirvana, freed from this chain of hotel lives, and reach utter peace in Uttarayana.[2]

I have not written to you for some time. For I am tired to the profound depth of my being.

Yet, since coming to Texas, I have felt as it were a sudden coming of Spring into my life through a breach in the ice castle of Winter. It has come to me like a revelation that all these days my soul had been thirsting for the draught of sunshine poured from the beaker of infinite space. The sky has embraced me, and the warmth of its caress thrills me with joy.

CHICAGO, *February 24th, 1921*

We have engaged our passage in a Dutch steamer, which will sail from New York on the 19th of March. My days in this country have not given me much pleasure—the simple course would have been for me to go straight back home.

Why did I not do so? No fool can say why he has been foolish. I have often dreamed of the time when my wayward youth took me to the loneliness of the sandbanks of the Padma, wandering in the neighbourhood of the wild-ducks under the gaze of the evening star. Certainly, that was not the life of the sane, but it fitted me like a fool's cap lined with dreams.

The fool who is content to do nothing whatever is at any rate free from care; but the one who tries in vain to change the face of the world knows no

[1] *Amrita* is the divine nectar which gives immortal life.

[2] The Poet's cottage at Santiniketan.

peace. I long to go back to my ducks, and yet I madly whirl round these manufacturing towns like a breath of the wild south breeze stirring the leaves of the documents of an attorney's office. Does it not know that these leaves do not shelter the flowers that wait for its whisper of love? Why should I be anything else but a poet? Was I not born a music-maker?

CHICAGO, *February 26th, 1921*

I have often wondered in my mind whether my path is the path of the good. When I came to this world I had nothing but a reed given to me, which was to find its only value in producing music. I left my school, I neglected my work, but I had my reed and I played on it 'in mere idle sport.' All along I had my one playmate, who also in His play produced music, among leaves, in rushing water, in silence of stars, in tears and laughter rippling into lights and shadows in the stream of human life. While my companion was this eternal Piper, this Spirit of play, I was nearest to the heart of the world. I knew its mother-tongue, and what I sang was caught up by the chorus of the wind and water and the dance-master of life.

But now came the schoolmaster in the midst of my dream-world, and I was foolish enough to accept his guidance. I laid aside my reed, I left my playground, where the Infinite Child is spending his eternity 'in mere idle sport.' In a moment I became old and carried the burden of wisdom on my back, hawking truths from door to door.

Why have I been made to carry this burden, I ask myself over and over again, shouting myself hoarse in this noisy world where everybody is crying up his own wares? Pushing the wheelbarrows of propaganda from continent to continent—is this going to be the climax of a poet's life? It seems to me like an evil dream, from which I occasionally wake up in the dead of night and grope about in the bed asking myself in consternation: 'Where is my music?'

It is lost, but I had no right to lose it, for I did not earn it with the sweat of my brow; it was a gift to me, which I could deserve if I knew how to love it. You know I have said somewhere that 'God praises me when I do good; but God loves me when I sing.' Praise is reward; it can be measured against the work you render; but love is above all rewards; it is measureless.

The poet who is true to his mission reaps his harvest of love; but the poet who strays into the path of the good is dismissed with applause. So I founded my International University—a great work! But I lose my little song—which loss can never be made up to me. How I wish I could find my reed again and be contemptuously ignored by the busy and the wise as a hopeless ne'er-do-well!

When I know for certain that I shall never be able to go back to that sweet obscurity which is the birthplace of flowers and songs, I feel home-sick. It is a world which is so near and yet so far away; so easy of access and yet so immensely difficult. Happiness we go on missing in our life, because it is so simple.

CHICAGO, *March 2nd, 1921*

Your last letter gives wonderful news about our students in Calcutta.[1] I hope that this spirit of sacrifice and willingness to suffer will grow in strength; for to achieve this is an end in itself. This is the true freedom! Nothing is of higher value—be it national wealth or independence—than disinterested faith in ideals, in the moral greatness of man.

The West has its unshakable faith in material strength and prosperity; and therefore, however loud grows the cry for peace and disarmament, its ferocity growls louder, gnashing its teeth and lashing its tail in impatience. It is like a fish, hurt by the pressure of the flood, planning to fly in the air. Certainly the idea is brilliant, but it is not possible for a fish to realize. We, in India, have to show the world what is that truth which not only makes disarmament possible but turns it into strength.

The truth that moral force is a higher power than brute force will be proved by the people who are unarmed. Life, in its higher development, has thrown off its tremendous burden of armour and a prodigious quantity of flesh, till man has become the conqueror of the brute world. The day is sure to come when the frail man of spirit, completely unhampered by air-fleets and dread-noughts, will prove that the meek are to inherit the earth.

It is in the fitness of things that Mahatma Gandhi, frail in body and devoid of all material resources, should call up the immense power of the meek that has been waiting in the heart of the destitute and insulted humanity of India. The destiny of India has chosen for its ally the power of soul, and not that of muscle. And she is to raise the history of man from the muddy level of physical conflict to the higher moral altitude.

What is Swaraj! It is *maya*; it is like a mist that will vanish, leaving no stain on the radiance of the Eternal. However we may delude ourselves with the phrases learnt from the West, Swaraj is not our objective. Our fight is a spiritual fight—it is for Man. We are to emancipate Man from the meshes that he himself has woven round him—these organizations of national egoism. The butterfly will have to be persuaded that the freedom of the sky is of higher value than the shelter of the cocoon. If we can defy the strong, the armed, the wealthy—revealing to the world the power of the immortal spirit—the whole castle of the Giant Flesh will vanish in the void. And then Man will find his Swaraj.

We, the famished ragged ragamuffins of the East, are to win freedom for all humanity. We have no word for 'Nation' in our language. When we borrow this word from other people, it never fits us. For we are to make our league with *Narayan*,[2] and our triumph will not give us anything but victory itself: victory for God's world. I have seen the West; I covet not the unholy feast in which she revels every moment, growing more and more bloated and red and dangerously delirious. Not for us is this mad orgy of midnight, with lighted torches, but awakenment in the serene light of the morning.

[1] Referring to the boycott of schools and colleges by thousands of students.

[2] The godlike element in man.

CHICAGO, *March 5th, 1921*

Lately I have been receiving more and more news and newspaper cuttings from India, giving rise in my mind to a painful struggle that presages a period of suffering which is waiting for me. I am striving with all my power to tune my mood of mind to be in accord with the great feeling of excitement sweeping across my country. But, deep in my being, why is there this spirit of resistance maintaining its place in spite of my strong desire to remove it? I fail to find a clear answer; and through my gloom of dejection breaks out a smile and a voice saying: 'Your place is on 'the sea-shore of worlds,' with children; there is your peace, and I am with you there.'

This is why lately I have been playing with inventing new metres. These are merest nothings that are content to be borne away by the current of time, dancing in the sun and laughing as they disappear. But while I play, the whole creation is amused, for are not flowers and leaves never-ending experiments in metres? Is not my God an eternal waster of time? He flings stars and planets in the whirlwind of changes, he floats paper-boats of ages, filled with his fancies, on the rushing stream of appearance. When I tease him and beg him to allow me to remain his little follower and accept a few trifles of mine as the cargo of his play-boat, he smiles and I trot behind him catching the hem of his robe.

But where am I among the crowd, pushed from behind, pressed from all sides? And what is this noise about me? If it is a song, then my own *sitar* can catch the tune and I can join in the chorus; for I am a singer. But if it is a shout, then my voice is wrecked, and I am lost in bewilderment. I have been trying all these days to find in it a melody, straining my ear, but the idea of non-co-operation, with its mighty volume of sound, does not sing to me; its congregated menace of negation shouts. And I say to myself: 'If you cannot keep step with your countrymen at this great crisis of their history, never say that you are right and the rest of them wrong; only, give up your rôle as a soldier, go back to your corner as a poet, be ready to accept popular derision and disgrace.'

R—, in support of the present movement, has often said to me that passion for rejection is a stronger power in the beginning than the acceptance of an ideal. Though I know this to be a fact, I cannot take it as a truth. We must choose our allies once for all; for they stick to us even when we might be glad to be rid of them. If we once claim strength from intoxication, then in the time of reaction our normal strength is bankrupt, and we go back again and again to the demon that lends us resources in a vessel whose bottom it takes away.

Brahma-vidya, the cult of Brahma, the Infinite Being, has for its object *mukti*, emancipation; while Buddhism has *nirvana*, extinction. It may be argued that both have the same ideas in different names. But names represent attitudes of mind and emphasize particular aspects of truth. *Mukti* draws our attention to the positive, and *mirvana* to the negative side of truth. Buddha kept silence through his teachings about the truth of the *Om*, the Everlasting Yes, his implication being that by the negative path, destroying the self, we naturally reach that truth. Therefore he emphasized the fact of *dukkha*, mis-

ery, which had to be avoided. But *Brahma-vidya* emphasized the fact of *ananda*, joy, which had to be attained. The latter cult also needs for its fulfilment the discipline of self-abnegation; yet it holds before its view the idea of Brahma, not only at the end, but all through the process of realization.

Therefore the idea of life's training was different in the Vedic period from that of the Buddhistic. In the former it was the purification of life's joy; in the latter it was the eradication of it. The abnormal type of asceticism, to which Buddhism gave rise in India, revelled in celibacy and mutilation of life in all different forms. The forest life of the Brahman was not antagonistic to the social life of man, but harmonious with it. It was like our musical instrument, the *támbura*, whose duty is to supply the fundamental notes to the music to save it from straying into discordance. It believed in the music of the soul, and its own simplicity was not to kill it, but to guide it.

The idea of non-co-operation is political asceticism. Our students are bringing their offering of sacrifices to what? Not to a fuller education, but to non-education. It has at its back a fierce joy of annihilation, which at its best is asceticism, and at its worst that orgy of frightfulness in which human nature, losing faith in the basic reality of normal life, finds a disinterested delight in an unmeaning devastation, as has been shown in the late war and on other occasions which came nearer to us. 'No,' in its passive moral form, is asceticism, and in its active moral form violence. The desert is as much a form of *himsa*, violence, as is the raging sea in storm; they are both against life.

I remember the day, during the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, when a crowd of young students came to see me in the first floor of our Vichitra[1] house. They said to me that if I would order them to leave their schools and colleges they would instantly obey. I was emphatic in my refusal to do so, and they went away angry, doubting the sincerity of my love for my motherland. And yet long before this popular ebullition of excitement, I myself had given a thousand rupees, when I had not five rupees to call my own, to open a Swadeshi store and courted banter and bankruptcy.

The reason of my refusal to advise those students to leave their schools was because the anarchy of mere emptiness never tempts me, even when it is resorted to as a temporary measure. I am frightened at an abstraction which is ready to ignore living reality. These students were no mere plantoms to me. Their life was a great fact to them and to the All. I could not lightly take upon myself the tremendous responsibility of a mere negative programme for them which would uproot their life from its soil, however thin and poor that soil might be. The great injury and injustice which had been done to those boys, who were tempted away from their career before any real provision was made, could never be made good to them. Of course, that is nothing from the point of view of an abstraction, which can ignore the infinite value even of the smallest fraction of reality. I wish I were the little creature Jack, whose one mission is to kill the Giant Abstraction, which is claiming the sacrifice of individuals all over the world under highly painted masks of delusion.

[1] The Poet's hall of music in Calcutta.

I say again and again that I am a poet; that I am not a fighter by nature. I would give everything to be one with my surroundings.

I love my fellow-beings and prize their love. Yet I have been chosen by destiny to ply my boat at that spot where the current is against me. What irony of fate is this, that I should be preaching co-operation of cultures between East and West on this side of the sea just at the moment when the doctrine of non-co-operation is preached on the other side!

You know that I do not believe in the material civilization of the West, just as I do not believe the physical body to be the highest truth in man. But I believe still less in the destruction of the physical body, and the ignoring of the material necessities of life. What is needed is the establishment of harmony between the physical and spiritual nature of man, the maintaining of balance between the foundation and superstructure. I believe in the true meeting of East and West. Love is the ultimate truth of soul. We should do all we can not to outrage that truth, but to carry its banner against all opposition. The idea of non-co-operation unnecessarily hurts that truth. It is not our hearth-fire, but the fire that burns out our hearth and home.

NEW YORK, *March 13th, 1921*

Things that are stationary have no responsibility and need no law. For death, even the tombstone is a useless luxury. But for a world, which is in ever-moving multitude advancing towards an idea, all its laws must have one principle of harmony. This is the law of creation.

Man became great when he found out this law for himself, the law of co-operation. It helped him to move together, to utilize the rhythm and impetus of the world march. He at once felt that this moving together was not mechanical, not an external regulation for the sake of some convenience. It was what the metre is in poetry—not a mere system of enclosure for keeping ideas from running away in disorder, but for vitalizing them, making them indivisible in a unity of creation.

So far this idea of co-operation has developed itself into individual communities, within the boundaries of which peace has been maintained and varied wealth of life produced. But outside these boundaries the law of co-operation has not been realized. Consequently the great world of man is suffering from ceaseless discordance. We are beginning to discover that our problem is worldwide, and no one people of the earth can work out its salvation by detaching itself from others. Either we shall be saved together or drawn together into destruction.

This truth has ever been recognized by all the great personalities of the world. They had in themselves the perfect consciousness of the undivided spirit of man. Their teachings were against tribal exclusiveness, and thus we find that Buddha's India transcended geographical India and Christ's religion broke through the bonds of Judaism.

To-day, at this critical moment of the world's history, cannot India rise above her limitations and offer the great ideal to the world that will work

towards harmony and co-operation between the different peoples of the earth? Men of feeble faith will say that India requires to be strong and rich before she can raise her voice for the sake of the whole world. But I refuse to believe it. That the measure of man's greatness is in his material resources is a gigantic illusion casting its shadow over the present-day world—it is an insult to man. It lies in the power of the materially weak to save the world from this illusion; and India, in spite of her penury and humiliation, can afford to come to the rescue of humanity.

The freedom of unrestrained egoism in the individual is licence and not true freedom. For his truth is in that which is universal in him. Individual human races also attain true freedom when they have the freedom of perfect revelation of Man and not that of their aggressive racial egoism. The idea of freedom which prevails in modern civilization is superficial and materialistic. Our revolution in India will be a true one when its forces are directed against this crude idea of liberty.

The sunlight of love has the freedom that ripens the wisdom of immortal life; but passion's fire can only forge fetters for ourselves. The Spiritual Man has been struggling for its emergence into perfection, and every true cry of freedom is for this emancipation. Erecting barricades of fierce separateness, in the name of national necessity, is offering hindrance to it. Therefore in the long run it is building a prison for the nation itself. For the only path of deliverance for nations is in the ideal humanity.

Creation is an endless activity of God's freedom; it is an end in itself. Freedom is true when it is a revelation of truth. Man's freedom is for the revelation of the truth of Man, which is struggling to express itself. We have not yet fully realized it. But those people who have faith in its greatness, who acknowledge its sovereignty, and have the instinctive urging in the heart to break down obstructions, are paving the way for its coming.

India has ever nourished faith in the truth of the Spiritual Man, for whose realization she has made in the past innumerable experiments, sacrifices and penances, some verging on the grotesque and the abnormal. But the fact is she has never ceased in her attempt to find it, even though at the tremendous cost of losing material success. Therefore I feel that the true India is an idea, and not a mere geographical fact. I have come into touch with this idea in far-away places of Europe, and my loyalty was drawn to it in persons who belonged to countries different from mine. India will be victorious when this idea wins the victory—the idea of 'Purusham mahantam adityavarnam tamasah parastat'—'The Infinite Personality, whose Light reveals itself through the obstruction of Darkness.' Our fight is against this Darkness. Our object is the revealment of the Light of this Infinite Personality of Man. This is not to be achieved in single individuals, but in one grand harmony of all human races. The darkness of egoism which will have to be destroyed is the egoism of the Nation. The idea of India is against the intense consciousness of the separateness of one's own people from others, which inevitably leads to ceaseless conflicts. Therefore my own prayer is, let India stand for the co-operation of all peoples of the world.

The spirit of rejection finds its support in the consciousness of separateness; the spirit of acceptance finds its base in the consciousness of unity. India has ever declared that Unity is Truth, and separateness is *maya*. This unity is not a zero; it is that which comprehends all, and therefore can never be reached through the path of negation.

Our present struggle to alienate our heart and mind from the West is an attempt at spiritual suicide. If, in the spirit of national vainglory, we shout from our housetops that the West has produced nothing that has an infinite value for man, then we only create a serious cause of doubt about the worth of any product of the Eastern mind. For it is the mind of Man, in the East and West, which is ever approaching Truth in her different aspects from different angles of vision. If it can be true that the standpoint of the West has betrayed it into an utter misdirection, then we can never be sure of the standpoint of the East. Let us be rid of all false pride and rejoice at any lamp being lit in any corner of the world, knowing that it is a part of he common illumination of our house.

The other day I was invited to the house of a distinguished art-critic of America who is a great admirer of old Italian Art. I questioned him if he knew anything of our Indian pictures, and he brusquely said that most probably he would hate them. I suspected he had seen some of them and hated them already. In retaliation I could have said something in the same language about Western Art. But I am proud to say it was not possible for me to do so. For I always try to understand Western Art and never to hate it.

Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have their origin. I am proud of my humanity, when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other countries as my own. Let me feel with unalloyed gladness that all the great glories of man are mine. Therefore it hurts me deeply when the cry of rejection rings loud against the West in my country with the clamour that Western education can only injure us.

It cannot be true. What has caused the mischief is the fact that for a long time we have been out of touch with our own culture and therefore Western culture has not found its true perspective in our life. Very often its perspective is wrong, giving our mental eye a squint. When we have intellectual capital of our own, the commerce of thought with the outer world becomes natural and fully profitable. But to say that such commerce is inherently wrong is to encourage the worst form of provincialism, productive of nothing but intellectual indigence.

The West has misunderstood the East. This is at the root of the disharmony that prevails between them. But will it mend matters if the East in her turn tries to misunderstand the West? The present age has been powerfully possessed by the West; it has only become possible because to her is given some great mission for man. We, from the East, have come to her to learn whatever she has to teach us; for by doing so we hasten the fulfilment of this age. We know that the East also has her lessons to give, and she has her own responsibility of not allowing her light to be extinguished. The time will come

when the West will find leisure to realize that she has a home of hers in the East where her food is and her rest.

NEW YORK, *March 18th, 1921*

I wish that I could be released from this mission. For such missions are like a mist that envelops our soul—they seem to shut us off from the direct touch of God's world. And yet I have such an immense hunger for this touch. The springtime has come—the sky is overflowing with sunshine. I long to be one with the birds and trees and the green earth. The call comes to me from the air to sing, but, wretched creature that I am, I lecture—and by doing it I ostracize myself from this great world of songs to which I was born. Manu, the Indian lawgiver, enjoins us not to cross the sea. But I have done so; I have sailed away from my native universe—from the birthplace of those morning jasmines, from the lotus lake of Saraswati, which greeted me when I was a child even as the finger-touch of my own mother. Now, when occasionally I come back to them, I am made to feel that I have lost my caste; and though they call me by my name and speak to me, they keep themselves apart.

I know that my own river Padma, who has so often answered to my music with an amused gleam of tender tolerance in her face, will separate herself from me behind an invisible veil when I come to her. She will say to me in a sad voice: 'Thou hast crossed the sea!'

The losing of Paradise is enacted over and over again by the children of Adam and Eve. We clothe our souls with messages and doctrines and lose the touch of the great life in the naked breast of Nature. This letter of mine, carrying the cry of a banished soul, will sound utterly strange to you in the present-day India.

We hold our mathematical classes in Santiniketan under the *madhavi*[1] bower. Is it not good for the students and others that, even in the busiest time of lessons, the branches overhead do not break out into a shower of geometrical propositions? Is it not good for the world that poets should forget all about the resolutions carried at monster meetings? Is it not right that God's own regiment of the useless should never be conscripted for any military contingency of the useful?

When the touch of spring is in the air, I suddenly wake up from my nightmare of giving 'messages' and remember that I belong to the eternal band of good-for-nothings; I hasten to join in their vagabond chorus. But I hear the whisper round me: 'This man has crossed the sea,' and my voice is choked.

We are leaving Europe to-morrow and my days of exile are coming to an end. Very likely my letters will be fewer in number from now, but I shall make up for this when I meet you in person under the shadow of the rain-clouds of July.

Pearson is busy seeking health and happiness, making himself ready for the time when he will join us in India in the cold season.

[1] White jasmine.

S.S. 'RHYNDAM'

The very fact that we have turned our face towards the East fills my heart with joy. For me my East is the poet's East, not that of a politician or scholar. It is the East of the magnanimous sky and exuberant sunlight, where once upon a time a boy found himself straying in the dim twilight of child-consciousness peopled with dreams. The child has grown, but never grown out of his childhood.

I realize it all the more strongly when some problem, political or otherwise, becomes clamorous and insistent, trying to exact its answer from me. I rouse myself, strain my mind, raise my voice for prophetic utterances, and try in every way to be worthy of the occasion, but in my heart of hearts I feel exceedingly small and, to my utter dismay, discover I am not a leader, not a teacher, and farthest of all away from being a prophet.

The fact becomes fully evident to me, that I had forgotten to grow. It comes of an incorrigible absentmindedness. My mind has ever wandered away from those things that mature one into wisdom and old age. I have neglected my lessons. And this utter want of training makes me such a wretchedly bad reader of journals dealing with the practical questions of the day! But I am afraid the present time is a tremendously difficult one in India for the child, the poet. It is no use protesting that he is lacking in understanding—that he is congenitally incapable of paying attention to anything urgent and serious. No, he must attend meetings or write editorials; cultivate cotton-fields, or accept some responsibility of grave and national importance, in order to make a fool of himself.

And yet my heart is aching and longing to meet, with proper ceremony, the first day of the rainy season, or fill every pore of my mind with the smell of mango blossoms. Is that allowable at the present moment? Does our south breeze still enjoy all the frivolities of spring days? Have our sunset hours taken the vow of discarding all traces of colours from their cloud turbans?

But what is the use of complaining? The poets are too primitive for this age. If they had not ignominiously been discarded by the law of evolution, they would long ago have grown into their career as politicians. But the mischief is—they have been left behind in a world which has stopped growing, where things are still important which have no use or market value. The more the call for action grows loud from across the sea, the more I feel conscious of something in me that cries: 'I am of no use—leave me alone to my utter inutility.'

But I know, when I reach India, the Poet will be defeated; and I shall piously study the newspapers—every paragraph of them. But for the present even poetry is at a disadvantage—for the sea is rough, my head is swimming, and the English language is extremely difficult to manage in a rolling ship.

S.S. 'RHYNDAM'

Sometimes it amuses me to see the struggle for supremacy that is going on between the different persons within me. In the present condition of India, when the call is sure to come to me to take some part, in some manner or other,

in some political affairs, the Poet at once feels nervous, thinking that his claims are likely to be ignored, simply because he is the most useless member in the confederacy of my personality. He fully anticipates that argument against him, and takes special pains to glorify his deficiency even before any complaint has been submitted by anybody on this point. He has proudly begun to assert: 'I belong to the great brotherhood of the supremely useless. I am the cup-bearer of the Gods. I share the common privilege with all divinities to be misunderstood. My purpose is to reveal Purposelessness to the children of the Immortal. I have nothing to do with committee meetings or laying of foundation-stones for structures that stand against the passage of time and are sure to be trampled to dust. I am to ply the ferry-boat that keeps open the traffic between this shore and the shore of Paradise—this is our King's mail-boat for the communication of messages, and not for carrying cargo to the markets.'

I say to him: 'Yes, I fully agree with you; but, at the same time, take my warning, that your mail-boat may have to be commandeered for other urgent purposes, wholly unconnected with the Celestial Postal Department.' His cheeks grow pale; his eyes become bemisted; his frail body shivers like a cypress at the first breath of winter, and he says to me: 'Do I deserve to be treated like this? Have you lost all your love for me, that you can talk of putting me under martial law? Did you not drink your first cup of Amrita from my hand, and has not the Citizenship of the Sphere of Music been conferred upon you through my persuasion?'

I sit dumb, and muse and sigh, when sheaves of newspaper-cuttings are poured upon my table, and a leer is spread upon the face of the Practical man; he winks at the Patriotic man sitting solemnly by his side; and the man who is Good thinks it his painful duty to oppose the Poet, whom he is ready to treat with some indulgence within proper limits.

As for me who am the President of this *Panchayat*,[1] I have my deepest sentiment of tenderness for this Poet, possibly because he is so utterly good-for-nothing and always the first to be ignored in the time of emergency. The timid Poet avoiding the observation of the Practical and the Good comes to my side and whispers: 'Sir, you are not a man made for the time of emergency—but for the time that transcends it on all sides.'

The rascal knows well how to flatter, and generally wins his case with me—especially when others are too certain of the result of their appeal; and I jump up from my judgement-seat and, holding the Poet by the hand, dance a jig and sing: 'I shall join you, Comrade, and be drunk and gloriously useless.' Ah, my evil luck! I know why the chairmen of meetings hate me, newspaper editors revile me, and the virile call me effeminate! So I try to take shelter among the children, who have the gift of being glad with things and men that have no value.

S.S. 'RHYNDAM'

My difficulty is that when, in my environment, some intense feeling of

[1] Committee.

pride or resentment concentrates its red light within a certain limited area, I lose my true perspective of life and the world, and it hurts deeply my nature. It is not true that I do not have any special love for my own country, but when it is in its normal state it does not obstruct outside reality; on the contrary, it offers a standpoint and helps me in my natural relationship with others. But when that standpoint itself becomes a barricade, then something in me asserts that my place is somewhere else.

I have not yet attained that spiritual altitude from which I can say, with perfect assurance, that such barricading is wrong, or even unnecessary; but some instinct in me says that there is a great deal of unreality in it, as there is in all passions that are generated through contraction of consciousness, through rejection of a great part of truth.

I remember your wondering why Christ gave no expression to His patriotism, which was so intense in the Jewish people. It was because the great truth of man, which He realized, through His love of God, would only be cramped and crushed within that enclosure. I have a great deal of the patriot and politician in me, and therefore I am frightened of them; and I have an inner struggle against submitting myself to their sway.

But I must not be misunderstood. There is such a thing as a moral standard of judgement. When India suffers from injustice, it is right that we should stand against it; and the responsibility is ours to right the wrong, not as Indians, but as human beings. There your position is higher than most of our countrymen's. You have accepted the cause of India for the sake of humanity. But I know that most of our people will accept your help as a matter of course and yet reject your lesson. You are fighting against that patriotism whereby the West has humiliated the East—the patriotism which is national egoism. This is a comparatively later growth in European history and a far greater cause of misery and injustice in the human world than the bloodthirsty ferocity, the nomadic savagery, in the primitive history of man. The Pathans came to India, and the Moghuls, and they perpetrated misdeeds in their heedlessness; but because they had no taint of patriotism they did not attack India at the very root of her life, keeping themselves superciliously aloof. Gradually they were growing one with us; and just as the Normans and Saxons combined into one people, our Muhammadan invaders would ultimately have lost their line of separateness and contributed to the richness and strength of Indian civilization.

We must remember that Hinduism is not the original Aryanism; in fact, a great portion of it is non-Aryan. Another great mixture had been awaiting us, the mixture with the Muhammadans. I know that there were difficulties in its way. But the greatest of all difficulties was lacking—the idolatry of Geography. Just see what hideous crimes are being committed by British patriotism in Ireland! It is a python which refuses to disgorge this living creature which struggles to live its separate life. For patriotism is proud of its bulk, and in order to hold in a bond of unity the units that have their own distinct individualities it is ever ready to use means that are inhuman. Our own patriots would do just

the same thing, if the occasion arose. When a minority of our population claimed its right of inter-caste marriage, the majority cruelly refused to allow it that freedom. It would not acknowledge a difference which was natural and real, but was willing to perpetrate a moral torture far more reprehensible than a physical one. Why? Because power lies in number and in extension. Power, whether in the patriotic or in any other form, is no lover of freedom. It talks of unity, but forgets that true unity is that of freedom. Uniformity is unity of bondage.

Suppose, in our Swaraj, the anti-Brahmin community refuses to join hands with us; suppose, for the sake of its self-respect and self-expression, it tries to keep an absolute independence—patriotism will try to coerce it into an unholy union. For patriotism has its passion of power; and power builds its castle upon arithmetic. I love India, but my India is an Idea and not a geographical expression. Therefore I am *not* a patriot—I shall ever seek my compatriots all over the world. You are one of them, and I am sure there are many others.

S.S. 'RHYNDAM'

Plato threatened to banish all poets from his Republic. Was it in pity or in anger, I wonder? Will our Indian Swaraj, when it comes to exist, pass a deportation order against all feckless creatures who are pursuers of phantoms and fashioners of dreams, who neither dig nor sow, bake nor boil, spin nor darn, neither move nor support resolutions?

I have often tried to imagine the banished hordes of poets establishing their own Republic in the near neighbourhood of that of Plato. Naturally, as an act of reprisal, His Excellency the Poet President is sure to banish from the Rhymers' Republic all philosophers and politicians. Just think of the endless possibilities arising from feuds and truces of these rival Republics—peace conferences, deputations of representatives, institutions with busy secretaries and permanent funds having for their object the bridging of the gulf between the two adversaries. Then think of a trivial accident, through which a hapless young man and a melancholy maiden, coming from the opposite territories, meet at the frontier, and owing to the influence of the conjunction of their respective planets fall in love with each other.

There is no harm in supposing that the young man is the son of the President of the Philosophers' Republic, while the maiden is the daughter of that of the Poets'. The immediate consequence is the secret smuggling of forbidden love-lyrics by the desperate youth into the very heart of the commentaries and controversies of the two contradictory schools of Philosophy—the one professed by the yellow-turbaned sages, proclaiming that *one* is truth and *two* is an illusion, and the other, which is the doctrine of the green-turbaned sages, asserting that *two* is truth and *one* is an illusion.

Then came the day of the great meeting, presided over by the Philosopher President, when the pandits of the two factions met to fight their dialectic duels finally to decide the truth. The din of debates grew into a

tumultuous hubbub; the supporters of both parties threatened violence and the throne of truth was usurped by shouts. When these shouts were about to be transmuted into blows, there appeared in the arena the pair of lovers who, on the night of the full moon of April, were secretly wedded, though such intermarriage was against the law. When they stood in the open partition between the two parties, a sudden hush fell upon the assembly.

How this unexpected and yet ever-to-be-expected event, mixed with texts liberally quoted from the proscribed love-lyrics, ultimately helped to reconcile the hopeless contradiction in logic is a long story. It is well known to those who have had the privilege to pursue the subsequent verdict of the judges that both doctrines are held to be undoubtedly true: that *one* is in *two*, and therefore *two* must find itself in *one*. The acknowledgment of this principle helped to make the intermarriage valid, and since then the two Republics have successfully carried out their disarmament, having discovered for the first time that the gulf between them was imaginary.

Such a simple and happy ending of this drama has caused widespread unemployment and consequent feeling of disgust among the vast number of secretaries and missionaries belonging to the institutions maintained, with the help of permanent funds, for the preaching of Union—those organizations which were so enormously perfect in their machinery that they could well afford to ignore the insignificant fact of their barrenness of result. A large number of these individuals gifted with an ineradicable passion for doing good are joining the opposite organizations, which have their permanent funds, in order to help them to prove and to preach that two is two and never the twain shall meet.

That the above story is a true one will, I am sure, be borne out by the testimony of even the august shade of Plato himself. This episode of the game of hide-and-seek of one in two should be sung by some poet; and therefore I request you to give it, with my blessing, to Satyendranath Datta,[1] that he may set it in those inimitable verse forms of which he is a master, and make it ring with the music of his happy laughter.

S.S. 'RHYNDAM'

The sea has been exceedingly rough. The wild east wind, playing its snake-charmer's bagpipe, has made a myriad of hissing waves raise their hoods to the sky. The rude handling by the sea does not affect me much, but the gloom and unrest and the tremendous rise and fall of the waves, like a giant's beating of the breast in despair, depress my mind.

The sad thought very often comes to me, with an imaginary supposition, that I may never reach the Indian shore; and my heart aches with longing to see the arms of my motherland extended into the sea with the palm-leaves rustling in the air. It is the land where I gazed into the eyes of my first great sweetheart—my muse—who made me love the sunlight, touching the top of

[1] A young poet of Bengal, greatly admired by Rabindranath Tagore. He has since, unfortunately, died.

the coconut row through a pale mist of the serene autumn morning, and the storm-laden rain-clouds rolling up from some abyss behind the horizon, carrying in their dark folds a thrilling expectation of a mad outburst of showers.

But where is this sweetheart of mine, who was almost the only companion of my boyhood, and with whom I spent my idle days of youth exploring the mysteries of dreamland? She, my Queen, has died; and my world has shut against me the door of that inner apartment of beauty which gives the real taste of freedom. I feel like Shah-Jehan when his beloved Mumtaz was dead. Now I have left to me my own progeny—a magnificent plan of an International University. But it will be like Aurangzeb, who will keep me imprisoned and become my lord and master to the end of my days. Every day my fear and distrust against it are growing in strength. For it has been acquiring power from outside my own resources, and it is material power.

Santiniketan has been the playground of my own spirit. What I created on its soil was made of my own dream-stuff. Its materials are few; its regulations are elastic; its freedom has the inner restraint of beauty. But the International University will be stupendous in weight and rigid in construction; and if we try to move it, it will crack. It will grow up into a bully of a brother, and browbeat its sweet elder sister into a cowering state of subjection. Beware of organization, my friend! They say organization is necessary in order to give a thing its permanence, but it may be the permanence of a tombstone.

This letter of mine will seem to you pessimistic. The reason is I am unwell and utterly home-sick; and the vision of home which haunts my mind night and day is 'Amader Santiniketan.'[1] But the big towers of the International University obstruct its view. I am tired, to the marrow of my bones, trying all these months for a purpose and working in a direction which is against the natural current of my inner being.

S.S. 'RHYNDAM'

You, who are given a stable and solid surface on which to work out your problems of daily life, cannot fully realize what a trial it has been for us, these two days, to be tossed upon a wild sea every moment of our existence. I do not feel sea-sick, but the great fact for us is, that we are the children of the land. This is an immovable fact—and yet, when this fact begins to move, it is not only misery, but also an affront to us. The whole sea seems to laugh loud at the conceited creatures who only have a pair of tottering legs and not even a fraction of a fin.

Every moment the dignity of man is outraged by making him helplessly tumble about in an infinite variety of awkwardness. He is compelled to take part in a very broad farce; and nothing can be more humiliating for him than to exhibit a comic appearance in his very sufferings. It is like making the audience roar with laughter by having the clown kicked into all manners of

[1] Referring to a song which the boys sing at the Asram, whose refrain is 'Amader Santiniketan,' meaning 'Our Santiniketan.'

helpless absurdities. While sitting, walking, taking meals, we are constantly being hurled about into unexpected postures which are shamefully inconvenient.

When Gods try to become funny in their sublime manner of perpetrating jokes we mortal creatures find ourselves at a terrible disadvantage; for their huge laughter, carried by the millions of roaring waves in flashing foam, keeps its divine dignity unimpaired, while we, on our side, find our self-respect knocked to pieces. I am the only individual in this steamer who is vying with the Gods by fashioning my misery into laughing words and refusing to be the mere passive instrument of an elemental foolery. A laughter which is tyranny has to be answered by another laughter of rebellion. And this letter of mine carries the laughter of defiance. I had no other object in sitting down to write this morning; I had nothing particular to say to you, and to try to think when the ship is rolling in such an insane manner is like trying to carry a full vessel of water while one is drunk; the greater part of the contents is spilt. And yet I must write this letter, merely to show that, though at the present moment I cannot stand erect on my legs, I can write. This is to assert, in the face of the ironical clapping of hands of the mighty Atlantic, that my mind not only can stand up straight in its world of language, but can run, and even dance. This is my triumph.

To-day is Tuesday; on the morning of Thursday we are expected to reach Plymouth. Your letters have helped me more than anything else during these extremely trying months of my exile—they have been like food and water to a soldier who is dragging his wounded and weary limbs, counting every step, across a difficult and doubtful road back to his camp-fire. However, I am coming to my journey's end and intensely hoping to see you when I reach home. What I have suffered God only knows.—I am longing for rest.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FEW DAYS spent in England on the Poet's return from America were on the whole happier and brighter than those of the previous year when the Dyer Debate in the House of Lords had poisoned the air. But he did not stay long enough to meet all those who were eagerly waiting his arrival. He had received invitations from every part of the Continent, and his time was short; for he had determined to get back to India at the earliest possible moment. In the letters from the Continent which follow in this chapter only a very slight portion of what actually happened is told. Many of his letters to me, at his own special request, have not been published; for in his self-diffidence he was almost ashamed, afterwards, to allow any record of the scenes of enthusiasm that greeted him everywhere to appear in print. Very rarely in history has a poet received such a welcome.

What touched him most deeply was the spiritual longing that was behind it all—the earnest hope, especially in the regions of Europe recently devastated by the war, that some light might come from the East to illumine the darkness. The ideal of Visva-bharati, which had become somewhat vague and nebulous before, now took on a more definite concrete shape. At the same time, he could not help but feel sadly that the cries of non-co-operation, which were so strident in India, would lead to his rejection by his own countrymen on his return.

Such a rejection did not take place, because in the heart of the national movement, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, there was a common centre in the universal principle of Ahimsa, or Non-violence, which Mahatma Gandhi professed. No one admired more than the Poet Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual appeal against brute force and his passionate devotion to the service of the poor.

LONDON, *April 10th, 1921*

I am glad to be in England again. One of the first men whom I happened to meet here was H.W. Nevinson; I felt that man's soul was alive in this country, which had produced such a man as that!

A land should be judged by its best products, and I have no hesitation in saying that the best Englishmen are the best specimens of humanity in the world.

With all our grievances against the English nation, I cannot help loving your country, which has given me some of my dearest friends. I am intensely glad of this fact, for it is hateful to hate. Just as a general tries, for his tactics, to attract a whole army of men into a *cul-de-sac*, in order to demolish them, our feeling of anger generalizes the whole people of a country, in order mentally to give them a crushing blow on a tremendously big scale.

Things that are happening in Ireland are ugly. The political lies that are accompanying them are stupendous and in retaliation our anger seeks a

victim adequately big; and we readily incriminate the whole people of England, though we know that a great number of Englishmen feel shame and sorrow for these brutalities quite as keenly as any disinterested outsiders.

The fact that such a great proportion of people here—whose interest in keeping Ireland tied to the British Empire is so vital—can feel so keenly the tyranny inflicted on the Irish people, proves the inherent love of justice that thrives in the heart of this country in spite of all aberrations. The saving of a people depends upon the noble personalities holding up the moral tradition high above the floods of iniquity that occasionally deluge the land.

Edmund Burke proves the greatness of Great Britain in spite of Warren Hastings; and we are grateful to Mahatma Gandhi for giving India the opportunity to prove that her faith in the Divine Spirit in man is alive still—in spite of a great deal of materialism in our religions, as they are practised, and a spirit of exclusiveness in our social system.

The fact is that the best people in all countries find their affinity with one another. The fuel displays its differences, but the fire is one. When the fire comes before my vision in this country I recognize it as the same thing which lights our path in India and illuminates our house. Let us seek that fire and know that wherever the spirit of separation is supreme there reigns darkness. But with the realization of unity comes truth and light. When we ignite our lamps, we at once send response to the eternal lights of heaven. You yourself are a bearer of a lamp from your own land, and let me in response light my own lamp with love for the great humanity revealed in your country.

[*The following letter (a copy of which he enclosed) was in answer to a lady who had complained that the Poet had appeared to give vent to a feeling of anger against the British people in one of his lectures.*]

LONDON, *April 12th, 1921*

Dear Madam,

I received your letter late that morning, and was sorry to learn that you had come to this hotel while I was engaged.

It is not unlikely that some unsuspected remnant of race-consciousness in your mind made you imagine that I gave vent to my feeling of anger against the British people in my lecture. I deeply feel for all the races who are being insulted and injured by the ruthless exploitation of the powerful nations belonging to the West or the East. I feel as much for the negroes, brutally lynched in America, often for economic reasons, and for the Koreans, who are the latest victims of Japanese imperialism, as for any wrongs done to the helpless multitude of my own country. I feel certain that Christ, were He living at the present day, would have been angry with the nations who attempt to thrive upon the life-blood of their victim races, just as He was angry with those who defiled God's temple with their unholy presence and profession. Surely He would have taken upon Himself the chastisement of these miscreants, especially when those who professed to be His disciples, whose ostensible

vocation was to preach peace and brotherhood of man, either kept a discreet silence whenever man's history waited for a voice of judgement or showed signs of virulence against the weak and down-trodden greatly surpassing that of men whose profession it was blindly to kill human beings.

On the other hand, though I sometimes congratulate myself on my own freedom from race-consciousness, very likely a sufficient amount of it is lingering in my subconscious mind, making itself evident to outsiders in my writings through special emphasis of indignation at any unjust suffering or humiliation that my own country is made to undergo. I hope that I can claim forgiveness for this weakness, considering that I never try to condone any wrongs done by my own countrymen against others belonging to different countries from ours.

AUTOUR DU MONDE, PARIS, *April 18th, 1921*

I have come back to the domain of dust from my short aeroplane career in mid-air, when my namesake from the high heaven, the Sun[1] shed upon me his smile of amused tenderness and some vagabond clouds of the April sky seemed to wonder in their minds if I were about to join their ranks.

Whenever I find time and sit alone before the window, I gravely nod my head and say to myself in a sad voice: "Those who have been born foolish can gladden the heart of God only when they have the freedom of solitariness and can spread their idle wings in the air and flit and hum for nothing at all. You, poet, are one such creature—you have to be alone to fulfil your nature. What is all this that you are planning? Must you guide the multitude and work with them for the building of an Institution?"

All through my life I have ever worked alone; for my life and my work have been one. I am like the tree, which builds up its timber by its own living process; and therefore it needs leisure and space, sunlight and air and not bricks and mortar, masons and the civil engineer.

All my poems have their roots in my dreams. But an International University needs a foundation, and not roots. It needs to be solidly built upon international boards and committees and funds contributed by men of prudence and foresight. Foresight is a gift which I wholly lack. I may have some insight, but no foresight at all. Foresight has the power of calculation: insight has the power of vision. He may have faith in insight to whom it belongs; and therefore he is not afraid of making mistakes or even of apparent failures. But foresight is impatient of all deficiencies. It constantly dwells on the possibilities of mistakes, only because it has not the vision of the whole. Therefore its plans are mostly solid and inflexible.

In the establishment of the International University the foresight of the experienced will never forsake me; it will go straight to the helm and take charge; and only then the prudent who give money and the wise who give advice will be satisfied. But where will remain the place for the foolish and the irresponsible?

[1] Referring to his name Rabi, which means the Sun.

The whole thing will have to be established on a permanent basis; but this so-called permanence is only bought at the cost of life and freedom. The cage is permanent, not the nest. And yet all that is truly permanent has to pass through an endless series of impermanences. The spring flowers are permanent, because they know how to die. The temple made of stone cannot make truce with death by accepting it. Proud of its bricks and mortar, it constantly opposes death, till it is defeated in the end.

Our Santiniketan depends for its permanence upon life. But an International University tries to build its permanence with the help of rules and regulations. But—

Never mind! Let me forget it for a moment. Possibly I am exaggerating. The reason is, the day is full of gloom. It has been snowing and raining; the road is muddy; and I am home-sick.

I am requested by some association to read a paper at one of their meetings. They asked me for a summary, which they will circulate among the members. I enclose a copy of it which I have given to them for circulation.

THE SUMMARY OF A LECTURE

From the beginning of their history the Western races have had to deal with Nature as their antagonist. This fact has emphasized in their minds the dualistic aspect of truth, the eternal conflict between good and evil. Thus it has kept up the spirit of fight in the heart of their civilization. They seek victory and cultivate power.

The environment in which the Aryan immigrants found themselves in India was that of the forest. The forest, unlike the desert or sea, is living; it gives shelter and nourishment to life. In such surroundings, the ancient forest-dwellers of India realized the spirit of harmony with the universe and emphasized in their minds the monistic aspect of Truth. They sought the realization of their souls through union with all.

The spirit of fight and the spirit of harmony both have their importance in the scheme of things. For making a musical instrument, the obduracy of materials has to be forced to yield to the purpose of the instrument-maker. But music itself is a revelation of beauty, it is not an outcome of fight; it springs from an inner realization of harmony. The musical instrument and the music both have their own importance for humanity.

The civilization that fights and conquers for Man, and the civilization that realizes for him the fundamental unity in the depth of existence, are complementary to each other. When they join hands, human nature finds its balance; and its pursuits, through rugged paths, attain their ultimate meaning in an ideal of perfection.

AUTOUR DU MONDE, PARIS, *April 21st, 1921*

When I sent my appeal for an International Institution to the Western people, I made use of the word "University" for the sake of convenience. But that word has not only an inner meaning, but also an outer association in the

minds of those who use it; and that fact tortures my idea into its own rigid shape. It is unfortunate.

I should not allow my idea to be pinned to a word for a foreign museum, like a dead butterfly. It must be known, not by a definition, but by its own life-growth.

In the past I saved our Santiniketan School from being trampled into smoothness by the steam-roller of the Education Department. Our school is poor in resources and equipment, but it has the wealth of truth in it which no money can ever buy; and I am proud of the fact that it is not a machine-made article perfectly modelled in a workshop—it is our very own.

If we must have a University, it should spring from our own life and be maintained by our own life. Someone may say that such freedom is dangerous and that a machine will help to lessen our personal responsibility and make things easy for us. Yes! Life has its risks, and freedom has its responsibility; and yet they are preferable on account of their own immense value, and not for any other ulterior results.

So long, I have been able to retain my perfect independence and self-respect, because I had faith in my own resources and proudly worked within their sovereign limits. My bird must still retain its freedom of wings and not be tamed into a sumptuous nonentity by any controlling agency outside its own living organism. I know that the idea of an International University is complex, but I must make it simple in my own way. I shall be content if it attracts round it men who have neither name nor fame nor worldly means, but who have the mind and faith; who are to create a great future with their dreams.

Very likely I shall never be able to work with a Board of Trustees, influential and highly respectable—for I am a vagabond at heart. But the powerful people of the world, the lords of the earth, make it difficult for me to carry out my work. I know it, and I have had experience of it in connection with Santiniketan. But I am not afraid of failure. I am only afraid of being tempted away from truth, in pursuit of success. The temptation assaults me occasionally; but it comes from the outside atmosphere. My own abiding faith is in life and light and freedom. And my prayer is:

"Lead me from the unreal to Truth."

This letter of mine is to let you know that I free myself from the bondage of help and go back to join with you the great "Brotherhood of the Tramps," who seem helpless, but are recruited by God for His own army.

STRASBOURG, *April 29th, 1921*

I am writing this from Strasbourg, where I am going to read my lecture at the University this evening.

I miss you very much at this moment; for I feel certain it would overwhelm you with happiness could you be with me now, realizing the great outburst of love for me in the continental countries of Europe which I have visited. I have never asked for it, or striven for it, and I never can believe that I have deserved it. However, if it be more than is due to me, I am in no way responsible for this mistake. For I could have remained perfectly happy in my obscurity to the end

of my days, on the banks of the Ganges, with the wild-ducks as my only neighbours on the desolate sand islands.

"I have only sown my dreams in the air," for the greater part of my life, and I never turned back to see if they bore any harvest. But the harvest now surprises me, almost obstructs my path, and I cannot make up my mind to claim it for my own. All the same, it is a great good fortune to be accepted by one's fellow-beings from across the distance of geography, history and language; and through this fact we realize how truly One is the mind of Man, and what aberrations are the conflicts of hatred and the competitions of self-interest.

We are going to Switzerland to-morrow, and our next destination will be Germany. I am to spend my birthday this year in Zürich. I have had my second birth in the West, and there is rejoicing at the event. But by nature all men are *dwija* or twice-born—first they are born to their home, and then, for their fulfilment, they have to be born to the larger world. Do you not feel yourself that you have had your second birth among us? And with this second birth you have found your true place in the heart of humanity.

It is a beautiful town, this Strasbourg, and to-day the morning light is beautiful. The sunshine has mingled with my blood and tinged my thoughts with its gold, and I feel ready to sing:—

"Brothers, let us squander this morning with futile songs."

This is a delightful room where I am sitting now, with its windows looking over the fringe of the Black Forest. Our hostess is a charming lady, with a fascinating little baby, whose plump fingers love to explore the mystery of my eye-glasses.

We have a number of Indian students in this place, among whom is Lala Harkishen Lal's son, who asks me to send you his respectful regards. He is a fine young man, frank and cheerful, loved by his teachers.

We have missed this week's letters, which are now evidently lost beyond recovery. It is difficult for me to forgive the Mediterranean for doing me this disservice! The present week's mail is due, and if Thos. Cook & Son are prompt about it we shall find our letters to-day!

GENEVA, *May 6th, 1921*

To-day is my birthday. But I do not feel it; for in reality it is a day which is not for me, but for those who love me. And away from you, this day is merely a date in the calendar. I wish I had a little time to myself to-day, but this has not been possible. The day has been crowded with visitors and the talk has been incessant, some part of which has unfortunately lapsed into politics, giving rise to a temperature in my mental atmosphere of which I always repent.

Political controversies occasionally overtake me like a sudden fit of ague, without giving sufficient notice; and then they leave me as suddenly, leaving behind a feeling of *malaise*. Politics are so wholly against my nature; and yet, belonging to an unfortunate country, born to an abnormal situation, we find it so difficult to avoid their outbursts. Now when I am alone I am wishing that I could still my mind in the depth of that infinite peace where all the wrongs

of the world are slowly-tuned up, out of their discordance, into the eternal rhythm of the flowers and stars.

But men are suffering all over the world, and my heart is sick. I wish I had the power to pierce this suffering with music and bring the message of abiding joy from the deeper regions of the world soul, and repeat to the people who are angry and to the people whose heads are bowed down in shame: "From joy all things are born, by joy they are maintained, and into joy they proceed and find their end."

Why should I be the one to air our grievances and give shrieking expression to the feeling of resentment? I pray for the great tranquillity of truth, from which have welled forth the immortal words that are to heal the wounds of the world and soothe the throbbing heat of hatred into forbearance.

The East and the West have met—this great fact of history has so far produced only our pitiful politics, because it has not yet been turned into truth. Such a truthless fact is a burden for both parties. For the burden of gain is no less than the burden of loss—it is the burden of the enormity of corpulence. The fact of the meeting of the East and the West still remains concentrated on the surface—it is external. The result is, all our attention is diverted to this surface where we are hurt, or where we can only think of material profits.

But deep in the heart of this meeting is surely maturing the seed of a great future of union. When we realize it, our mind regains its detachment from the painful tension of the immediate present and attains its faith in the eternal—it is relieved from the hysterical convulsions of exasperated despair. We have learnt from our ancestors that the Advaitam is the eternal significance of all passing events—which is the principle of unity in the heart of dualism. The dualism of East and West contains that unity, and therefore it is sure to be fulfilled in union.

You have expressed that great truth in your life. In your love for India you carry that message of Eternity. In you, the apparent conflict of the East and the West has unveiled the great beauty of its inner reconciliation. We, who are clamouring for vengeance, only conscious of the separateness, and therefore expecting absolute separation, have not read the great purpose of our history right.

For passion is darkness. It exaggerates isolated facts and makes our minds stumble against them at every step. Love is the light that reveals to us the perfection of unity and saves us from the constant oppression of the detached—of the immediate.

And therefore I embrace you, take my inspiration from your love and send you my birthday *namaskar.*[1]

NEAR ZÜRICH, *May 10th, 1921*

I have just received a birthday greeting from Germany through a committee consisting of men like Eucken, Harnack, Hauptmann and others,

[1] Greeting.

and with it a most generous gift, consisting of at least four hundred copies of valuable German books. It has deeply touched my heart, and I feel certain that it will find response in the hearts of my countrymen.

To-morrow I have my invitation at Zürich, and on the 13th of this month I leave Switzerland for Germany. Haven't I said to you, in some letter of mine, that my life has followed the course of my celestial namesake, the Sun, and that the last part of my hours is claimed by the West? How genuine has been the claim I never realized before I had visited the continent of Europe. I feel deeply thankful for this privilege, not only because it is sweet to realize appreciation from one's fellow-beings, but because it has helped me to feel how near we are to the people who in all appearances are so different from ourselves.

Such an opportunity has become rare to us in India because we have been segregated from the rest of the world. This has acted upon the minds of our people in two contrary ways. It has generated that provincialism of vision in us which either leads to an immoderate boastfulness, urging us to assert that India is unique in every way—absolutely different from other countries—or to a self-depreciation which has the sombre attitude of suicide. If we can come into real touch with the West through the disinterested medium of intellectual co-operation, we shall gain a true perspective of the human world, realize our own position in it, and have faith in the possibility of widening and deepening our connection with it. We ought to know that a perfect isolation of life and culture is not a thing of which any race can be proud. The dark stars are isolated, but stars that are luminous belong to the eternal chorus of lights.

Greece was not shut up in the solitude of her culture, nor was India, when she was in the full radiance of her glory. We have a Sanskrit expression, "That which is not given is lost." India, in order to find herself, must give herself. But this power of giving can only be perfected when it is accompanied by the power of receiving. That which cannot give, but can only reject, is dead. The cry, which has been raised to-day, of rejecting Western culture only means the paralysing of our own power to give anything to the West. For, in the human world, as I have said, giving is exchanging. It is not one-sided. Our education will attain its perfection, not by refusing to accept all lessons from the West, but by realizing its own inheritance. This will give us the means to pay for such lessons. Our true wealth, intellectual as well as material, lies not in the acquisition itself, but in our own independent means of acquisition.

So long as our intellectual attainments were solely dependent on an alien giver, we have been accepting and not acquiring. Therefore these attainments have mostly been barren of production, as I have discussed in my pamphlet on Education. But it would be wrong to blame the Western culture itself for such futility. The blame lies in our not using our own receptacle for this culture. Intellectual parasitism causes degeneracy in the intellectual organs of the mind. It is not the food, but the parasitism, that has to be avoided.

At the same time, I strongly protest against Mahatma Gandhi's depreciation of such great personalities of modern India as Ram Mohun Roy in his zeal

for declaiming against our modern education.[1] Every Indian ought to be proud of the fact that, in spite of immense disadvantages, India still has been able to produce greatness of personality in her children, such as we find in Ram Mohun Roy. Mahatmaji has quoted the instances of Nanak, Kabir and other saints of mediaeval India. They were great because in their life and teaching they made organic union of the Hindu and Muhammadan cultures—and such realization of the spiritual unity through all differences of appearance is truly Indian.

In the modern age, Ram Mohun Roy had that comprehensiveness of mind to be able to realize the fundamental unity of spirit in the Hindu, Muhammadan and Christian cultures. Therefore he represented India in the fullness of truth; and this truth is based, not upon rejection, but on perfect comprehension. Ram Mohun Roy could be perfectly natural in his acceptance of the West, only because his education had been perfectly Eastern—he had the full inheritance of the Indian wisdom. He was never a schoolboy of the West, and therefore he had the dignity to be a friend of the West. If he is not understood by modern India, this only shows that the pure light of her own truth has been obscured for the moment by the storm-clouds of passion.

HAMBURG, *May 17th, 1921*

It has been a perpetual sunshine of kindness for me all through my travels in this country. While it delights me, it makes me feel embarrassed. What have I to give to these people? What have they received from me? But the fact is, they are waiting for the daybreak after the orgies of the night, and they have their expectation of light from the East.

Do we feel in the soul of India that stir of the morning which is for all the world? Is the one string of her *ektara*[2] being tuned, which is to give the key-note to the music of a great future of Man—the note which will send a thrill of response from shore to shore? Love of God in the hearts of the mediaeval saints of India—like Kabir and Nanak—came down in showers of human love, drowning the border-lines of separation between Hindus and Mussulmans.

They were giants, not dwarfs, because they had spiritual vision, whose full range was in the Eternal—crossing all the barriers of the moment. The human world in our day is much larger than in theirs; conflicts of national self-interest and race-traditions are stronger and more complex; the political dust-storms are blinding; the whirlwinds of race antipathy are fiercely persistent; the sufferings caused by them are world-wide and deep. The present age is waiting for a divine word, great and simple, which creates and heals. What has moved me profoundly is the fact that suffering Man in this continent has turned his face to the East.

It is not the man of politics, or the man of letters, but the simple man whose faith is living. Let us believe in his instinct; let his expectation guide us

[1] Mahatma Gandhi had been reported as saying that Ram Mohun Roy was a pigmy as compared with Kabir and Nanak, who had never had any touch with the West.

[2] A one-stringed instrument.

to our wealth. In spite of the immense distractions of our latter-day degeneracy, India still cherishes in her heart the immortal mantram of Peace, of Goodness, of Unity—

"Santam, Sivam, Advaitam."

The message of the "One in the All," which had been proclaimed in the shade of India's forest solitude, is waiting to bring reconciliation to the men who are fighting in the dark and have lost the recognition of their brotherhood.

Of all men in modern India, Ram Mohun Roy was the first man and the greatest who realized this truth. He held up high the pure light of the Upanishads that shows the path whereby the conquerors of the self "enter into the heart of the all"—the light which is not for rejection, but for comprehension.

The Mussulmans came to India with a culture which was aggressively antagonistic to her own. But in her saints the spirit of the Upanishads worked in order to attain the fundamental harmony between things that were apparently irreconcilable. In the time of Ram Mohun Roy the West had come to the East with a shock that caused panic in the heart of India. The natural cry was for exclusion. But this was the cry of fear, the cry of weakness, the cry of the dwarf. Through the great mind of Ram Mohun Roy the true spirit of India asserted itself and accepted the West, not by the rejection of the soul of India, but by the comprehension of the soul of the West.

The mantram which gives our spiritual vision its right of entrance into the soul of all things is the mantram of India, the mantram of Peace, of Goodness, of Unity—Santam, Sivam, Advaitam. The distracted mind of the West is knocking at the gate of India for this. And is it to be met there with a hoarse shout of exclusion?

HAMBURG, *May 20th, 1921*

I trust that my long voyage has now come nearly to its end. Every moment I hear the call of the beach and see the vision of the evening lamp watching behind the window for the return of the weary traveller. But there is one thought that never ceases to buzz in my mind. It is that the weather-beaten boat, after its voyage across the sea, may be utilized as the ferry for the miscellaneous errands of daily traffic.

Today, life is nowhere normal in the world. The atmosphere is swarming with problems. Singers are not allowed to sing; they have to shout messages. But, my dear friend, is my life to be one perpetual polar summer, an endless monotony of a day of lidless light, of ceaseless duties, with never a night of stars to open before my vision the gateway of the Infinite? Is the fact of death a mere fact of stoppage? Does it not speak to us of our right of entrance into a region beyond the bounds of patriotism? When am I going to make my final adjustment of life and be ready for the invitation to the world of Spirit?

We are taught by our Western schoolmaster that there is nothing of importance that is not shown in the national school map; that only *my* country is my earth and heaven; that only in *my* country are united my life and my

immortality. And when we try to reject the West, in our pride of country, we, like a ragged scamp, pick the pocket of the same West and pilfer that same spirit of rejection.

But our fathers had a clearer consciousness of a truth of freedom, which was never clipped of its wings and shut up in a geographical cage. I feel that my time has come for the realization of that truth; and I pray that I may never die a patriot, or a politician, but as a free spirit; not as a journalist, but as a poet.

STOCKHOLM, *May 27th, 1921*

I have been following the track of spring from Switzerland to Denmark, and from Denmark to Sweden, watching everywhere flowers breaking out in a frenzy of colours. And it seems to me like the earth's shouting of victory, and flinging up its coloured cap to the sky. My path in the West also has had the same exuberant outburst of welcome.

At first I felt the impulse to describe it to you in detail; for I was sure it would give you great delight. But now I shrink from doing it. For somehow it does not cause exultation in my own mind, but makes me sad. It would be absurd for me to claim what has been offered to me as fully mine. The fact is, there is a rising tide of heart in the West rushing towards the shores of the East, following some mysterious law of attraction. The unbounded pride of the European peoples has suddenly found a check, and their mind appears to be receding from the channel it had cut for itself.

The giant, being weary, is seeking peace; and as the fountain of peace has ever flowed from the East, the face of troubled Europe is instinctively turned to-day towards the East. Europe is like a child who has been hurt in the midst of her game. She is shunning the crowd and looking out for her mother. And has not the East been the mother of spiritual humanity, giving it life from its own life?

How pitiful it is that we, in India, are unaware of this claim for succour from Europe which has come to our door; that we fail to realize the great honour of the call to serve humanity in her hour of need!

Bewildered at heart by the great demonstrations made in my honour in these countries, I have often tried to find out the real cause. I have been told that it was because I loved humanity. I hope that this is true; and all through my writings, my love of man has found its utterance and touched human hearts across all barriers. If it *be* true, then let that truest note in my writings guide my own life henceforth!

The other day, when I was resting alone in my room in the hotel at Hamburg, timidly there entered two shy and sweet German girls, with a bunch of roses for their offering to me. One of them, who spoke broken English, said to me: "I love India." I asked her: "Why do you love India?" She answered: "Because you love God."

The praise was too great for me to accept with any degree of complaisance. But I hope its meaning was in the expectation from me which it carried, and therefore was a blessing. Or possibly she meant that my country loved

God, and therefore she loved India. That also was an expectation whose meaning we should try to appreciate and understand.

The nations love their own countries; and that national love has only given rise to hatred and suspicion of one another. The world is waiting for a country that loves God and not herself. Only that country will have the claim to be loved by men of all countries.

When we hear "Bande Mataram" from the housetops, we shout to our neighbours: "You are not our brothers." But that is not true. Therefore, because it is untrue, it pollutes the air, and darkens the sky. Whatever may be its use for the present, it is like the house being set on fire simply for roasting the pig! Love of self, whether national or individual, can have no other destination except suicide. Love of God is our only fulfilment; it has in it the ultimate solution of all problems and difficulties.

On the day after to-morrow we shall be leaving Sweden for Berlin. The Czecho-Slovakian Government has promised us an air trip from Berlin to Prague, and from Prague to Munich. From Munich we are expected to visit Darmstadt, where a gathering of some notable persons of Germany will be held to meet us. It will be over on or about the 15th of June, and then through France and Spain we shall be able to take our ship at the beginning of July—if not earlier.

BERLIN, *May 28th, 1921*

I am leaving Germany to-night for Vienna. From there I go to Czecho-Slovakia, and then to Paris—and then, to the Mediterranean Sea! Our steamer sails on the 2nd of July, and so this letter is likely to be my last.

You can have no idea what an outbreak of love has followed me and enveloped me everywhere I have been in Scandinavia and Germany. All the same, my longing is to go back to my own people. I have lived my life there, done my work there, given my love there, and I must not mind if the harvest of my life has not had its full payment there. The ripening of the harvest itself brings its ample reward for me. And therefore the call comes to me from the field where the sunlight is waiting for me; where the seasons, each in turn, are making their inquiries about my home-coming. They know me, who all my life have sowed there the seeds of my dreams. But the shadows of evening are deepening on my path, and I am tired. I do not want praise or blame from my countrymen. I want to take my rest under the stars.

BERLIN, *June 4th, 1921*

To-day my visit to Berlin has come to an end. To-night we are starting for Munich. It has been a wonderful experience in this country for me! Such fame as I have got I cannot take at all seriously. It is too readily given, and too immediately. It has not had the perspective of time. And this is why I feel frightened and tired at it—and even sad.

I am like a house-lamp, whose place is in a corner, and whose association is that of intimacy of love. But when my life is made to take part in a firework display, I apologize to the stars and feel humble.

I saw *Post Office* acted in a Berlin theatre. The girl who took the part of Amal was delightful in her acting, and altogether the whole thing was a success. But it was a different interpretation from that of ours in our own acting in Vichitra. I had been trying to define the difference in my mind, when Dr. Otto of Marburg University, who was among the audience, hit upon it. He said that the German interpretation was suggestive of a fairy-story, full of elusive beauty, whereas the inner significance of this play is spiritual.

I remember, at the time when I wrote it, my own feeling which inspired me to write it. Amal represents the man whose soul has received the call of the open road—he seeks freedom from the comfortable enclosure of habits sanctioned by the prudent and from walls of rigid opinion built for him by the respectable. But Madhab, the worldly-wise, considers his restlessness to be the sign of a fatal malady; and his adviser, the physician, the custodian of conventional platitudes—with his quotations from prescribed text-books full of maxims—gravely nods his head and says that freedom is unsafe and every care should be taken to keep the sick man within walls. And so the precaution is taken.

But there is the post office in front of his window, and Amal waits for the king's letter to come to him direct from the king, bringing to him the message of emancipation. At last the closed gate is opened by the king's own physician, and that which is "death" to the world of hoarded wealth and certified creeds brings him awakening in the world of spiritual freedom.

The only thing that accompanies him in his awakenment is the flower of love given to him by Sudha.

I know the value of this love, and therefore my petition to the Queen was: "Let me be the gardener of thy flower garden"—the gardener, whose only reward is daily to offer his garlands to the Queen.

Do you think that *Post Office* has some meaning at this time for my country in this respect, that her freedom must come direct from the King's Messenger, and not from the British Parliament; and that when her soul awakes nothing will be able to keep her within walls? Has she received her letter yet from the King?

Ask Dinu what is the original of the following translation:

My *Vina* breaks out in strange disquiet measure,
My heart to-day is tremulous with the heart-throbs of the world.
Who is the restless youth that comes, his mantle fluttering in the breeze?
The woodland resounds with the murmur of joy at the dance lyric of the light,
The anklet-bells of the dancer quiver in the sky with an unheard tinkle,
To whose cadence the forest leaves clap their hands.
The hope for the touch of a nearing footstep spreads a whisper in the grass.
And the wind breaks its fetters, distraught with the perfume of the Unknown.

To-day is the 5th of June. Our steamer sails on the 3rd of July.

DARMSTADT, *June 10th, 1921*

In Darmstadt they have a gathering of people from all parts of Germany to meet me. We have our meeting in the Grand Duke of Hesse's garden, where my audience will bring before me their questions. I give them monologues in answer, and Count Keyserling translates them into German for those who cannot follow my English.

Yesterday I reached this place, and in the afternoon we had our first meeting.

The first question put to me by a Canadian German was: "What is the future of this scientific civilization?"

After I had answered him, he again asked me: "How is the problem of over-population to be solved?"

After my answer, I was asked to give them some idea about the true character of Buddhism.

These three subjects took up fully three hours. It is delightful to feel the earnestness of these people. They have the habit of mind to think out the deeper problems of life; they deal seriously with ideas. In India, in our modern schools, we merely receive our ideas from textbooks, for the purpose of passing examinations. Besides that, our modern schoolmasters are Englishmen; and they, of all the Western nations, are the least susceptible to ideas. They are good, honest and reliable, but they have a vigorous excess of animal spirits which seek for exercise in racing, fox-hunting, boxing-matches, etc., and they offer stubborn resistance to all contagion of ideas.

Therefore our English educationalists do not inspire our minds. We do not realize that ideas are necessary in order to enable us to live a true life. We do not possess a genuine enthusiasm, which is the gift of the soul. Our principal object and occupation are going to be the dissipations of politics, whose goal is success, whose path is the zigzag of compromise—that politics which in every country has lowered the standard of morality, has given rise to a perpetual contest of lies and deception, cruelties and hypocrisies, and has increased inordinately national habits of vulgar vainglory.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 5th, 1921*

Land has its claims upon one, in return for its hospitality, but sea has none; it repudiates humanity with a magnificent indifference; its water is solely occupied in an eternal dialogue with the sky- the two inseparable companions who retain their irresponsible infancy as on the first day of their creation.

Land imposes on us our mission of usefulness, and we have to be occupied with lectures and text-books; and our guardians have the right to rebuke us when we waste good paper in making literary paper-boats. But the sea has no inspiration of moral obligation for us; it offers no foundation for a settled life; its waves raise their signals and have only one word of command: "Pass on."

I have observed, on board a steamer, how men and women easily give way

to their instinct of flirtation, because water has the power of washing away our sense of responsibility, and those who on land resemble the oak in their firmness behave like floating seaweed when on the sea. The sea makes us forget that men are creatures who have their innumerable roots and are answerable to their soil.

For the same reason, when I used to have my dwelling on the bosom of the great river Padma, I was nothing more than a lyrical poet. But since I have taken my shelter at Santiniketan I have developed all the symptoms of growing into a schoolmaster, and there is grave danger of my ending my career as a veritable prophet! Already everybody has begun asking me for "Messages"; and the day may come when I shall be afraid to disappoint them. For when prophets do appear unexpectedly to fulfil their mission, they are stoned to death; and when those whom men warmly expect to be prophets fail to act their part to the end, they are laughed to extinction. The former have their compensation; for they fulfil their purpose, even through their martyrdom. But for the latter, their tragic end is utter wastefulness; it satisfies neither man nor Gods.

Who is there to save a poet from disaster? Can anybody give me back my good-for-nothingness? Can anyone restore to me the provision with which I began life's journey to the realm of inutility? One day I shall have to fight my way out of my own reputation; for the call of my Padma river still comes to me through this huge and growing barrier. It says to me: "Poet, where are you?" And all my heart and soul try to seek out that poet. It has become difficult to find him. For the great multitude of men have heaped honours on him, and he cannot be extricated from under them. I must stop here—for the ship's engine is throbbing in a measure which is not that of my pen.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 6th, 1921*

I suppose you have read in the newspapers that in Europe I met with an enthusiastic welcome. No doubt I was thankful to the people for their kind feelings towards me; but somehow, deep in my heart I was bewildered and almost pained.

Any expression of feeling by a great multitude of men must have in it a large measure of unreality. It cannot help exaggerating itself simply because of the cumulative effect of emotion upon the crowd-mind. It is like a sound in a hall, which is echoed back from innumerable corners. An immense amount of it is only contagion—it is irrational, and every member of the crowd has the freedom to draw upon his own imagination for building up his opinion. Their idea of me cannot be the real me. I am sorry for it and for myself. It makes me feel a longing to take shelter in my former obscurity. It is hateful to have to live in a world made up of other people's illusions. I have seen people press round me to touch the hem of my robe, to kiss it in reverence—it saddens my heart. How am I to convince these people that I am of them and not above them, and that there are many among them who are worthy of reverence from me?

And yet I know for certain that there is not a single individual in their

midst who is a poet as I am. But reverence of this kind is not for a poet. The poet is for conducting ceremonial in the festival of life; and for his reward he is to have his open invitation to all feasts wherever he is appreciated. If he is successful, he is appointed to the perpetual comradeship of Man—not as a guide, but as a companion. But if, by some mad freak of fate, I am set upon an altar, I shall be deprived of my own true seat—which by right is mine and not another's.

It is far better for a poet to miss his reward in this life rather than to have a false reward, or to have his reward in an excessive measure. The man who constantly receives honour from admiring crowds has the grave danger of developing a habit of mental parasitism upon such honour. He consciously, or unconsciously, grows to have a kind of craving for it, and feels injured when his allowance is curtailed or withdrawn.

I become frightened of such a possibility in me, for it is vulgar. Unfortunately, when a person has some mission of doing some kind of public good, his popularity becomes the best asset for him. His own people most readily follow him, when other people have the same readiness—and this makes it a matter of temptation for such an individual. A large number of his followers will consider themselves as deceived by him when the fickle flow of popularity changes its course.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 7th, 1921*

In this modern age of the philosophy of relativity I suppose I cannot claim for myself the quality of absolute poetdom. It is evident that the poet in me changes its features and spontaneously assumes the character of the preacher with the change of its position. I have evolved in me a certain philosophy of life which has in it a strong emotional element, and therefore it can sing as well as speak. It is like a cloud that can break out in a shower of rain, or merely tinge itself in colours and offer decorations to the festival of the sky. For this reason I give rise to expectations which are almost of a contrary character—I am asked to give gladness, and I am asked to give help.

To give gladness requires inspiration; to give help requires organization—the one depends principally upon myself, and the other upon means and materials that are outside me. Here come in difficulties which make me pause. Poesy creates its own solitude for the poet. The consequent detachment of mind which is necessary for creative life is lost or broken when the poet has to choose a constructive programme. The work of construction requires continuous employment of attention and energy—it cannot afford to grant leave to the poet to retire and come to himself.

This creates conflict within my nature and very often makes me think that the guidance of the Good is not always for the Best. And yet, its call being natural to me, I cannot ignore it altogether. But what constantly hurts me is the fact that, in a work of organization, I have to deal with and make use of men who have more faith in the material part than in the creative ideal.

My work is not for the success of the work itself, but for the realization of

the ideal. But those in whose minds the reality of the ideal is not clear, and love for the ideal is not strong, try to find their compensation in the success of the work; and they are therefore ready for all kinds of compromise.

I know that the idea which I have in mind requires the elimination of all passions that have their place in the narrow range of life; but most people believe that these passions are the steam-power which gives velocity to our motives. They quote precedents; they say that pure idea has never achieved any result. But when you say that the result is not greater than the idea itself, then they laugh at you!

During the last fourteen months of my campaign for an International University, I have said to myself over and over again: "Never let your pride be hurt at any prospect of failure; for failure can never affect truth." My weakness creeps in where I love. When those whom I love feel exultant at the expectation of success, it urges me to procure this toy for them.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 8th, 1921*

I must not exaggerate. Let me admit that the realization of ideals has its external part, which depends for its development upon materials. And materials—both human and non-human—offer resistance to success, and therefore must not be lightly spoken of.

But what I had in my mind was this, that the mastery of grammar and the creation of literature may not coincide. Emphasis upon grammar may hinder perfectness of expression. Success in materials may go contrary to the fulfilment of ideals. For material success has its temptation. Often our idealism is exploited for the sake of obtaining success—we have seen that in the late war. In consequence, the battle has been won, but the ideal has not been reached.

Ever since the scheme of the International University has been made public, the conflict in my mind has been unceasing—the conflict between the vision of the ideal and the vision of success. The plan itself is big and has a scope for the ambition of men who love to show their power and gain it. It is not merely ambition which lures our minds; it is the wrong value which we set upon certain results. To be certain of the inner truth requires imagination and faith, and therefore it is always in danger of being missed, even when it is near at hand; whereas external success is obvious.

You remember how Chitra, in my play of that name, became jealous of the physical beauty lent to her by the Gods—because it was a mere success, not truth itself. Truth can afford to be ignored, but not to be allied to unreality for the sake of success.

Unfortunately facts are cited to show that all over the world the prudent and the wise are in the habit of making a pact with Mephistopheles to build roads to reach their God. Only they do not know that God has *not* been reached—and that success and God are not the same thing. When I think of all this, I feel a longing for the simplicity of poverty, which, like the covering of certain fruits, conceals and protects the richness and freshness of the

deeper ideal. All the same, as I have said, the pursuit of success must not be abandoned for mere want of energy and spirit. Let it represent our sacrifice for the truth, and not for itself.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 9th, 1921*

All true ideals claim our best, and it cannot be said with regard to them that we can be content with the half, when the whole is threatened. Ideals are not like money. They are a living reality. Their wholeness is indivisible. A beggar woman may be satisfied with an eight-anna bit when sixteen annas are denied her; but a half-portion of her child she will never consent to accept!

I know that there is a call for me to work towards the true union of East and West. I have unconsciously been getting ready for this mission. When I wrote my *Sadhana* lectures, I was not aware that I had been fulfilling my destiny. All through my tour I was told that my *Sadhana* had been of real help to my Western readers. The accident which made me translate *Gitanjali* and the sudden and unaccountable longing which took me over to Europe at the beginning of my fiftieth year—all combined to push me forward to a path whose destination I did not clearly know when I first took it. This, my last tour in Europe, has made it definitely known to me.

But, as I have said before, the claims of all great ideals have to be fully paid. Not merely the negative moral injunction of non-violence will suffice. It is a truism to say that the creative force needed for true union in human society is love. Justice is only an accompaniment to it, like the beating of a tom-tom to the song. We in the East have long been suffering humiliation at the hands of the West. It is enormously difficult for us either to cultivate, or express, any love for Western races—especially as it may have the appearance of snobbishness or prudence. The talk and behaviour of the Moderate Party in India fail to inspire us because of this—because their moderation springs from the colourless principle of expediency. The bond of expediency between the powerful and the weak must have some element in it which is degrading. It brings to us gifts for which we can claim no credit whatever, except, perhaps, persistency of expectation and unbaffled employment of importunity.

Self-sacrifice on the part of the gainer, and not solely on the part of the giver, imparts true value to the gift. When our claims are feeble, and our method of realizing them is altogether unheroic, then the very boons granted to us make us poorer. That is why the Moderates in India look so pitifully obscure by the side of the Extremists.

However, my point is that, as an idealist, it is immensely difficult for me to nourish any feeling of love for those people who themselves are neither eager to offer it to us nor care to claim it from us. But never let me look at that condition as an absolute one. There are screens between us which have to be removed—possibly they are due to the too great inequality of circumstances and opportunities between the two parties. Let us, by every means in our power, struggle against our antipathies—all the while taking care to keep wide open channels of communication through which individuals, from both sides,

may have facilities to meet in the spirit of good-fellowship. I cannot tell you how thankful I feel to you, who have made it easier for me to love your people. For your own relationship with India has not been based upon a sense of duty, but upon genuine love. It makes me feel sad when I see this lesson of your love being lost—when it fails to inspire our people with the realization that love of humanity is with you far truer than patriotism.

I deeply regret that you could not accompany me in my last tour in Europe, though I understand the reasons that prevented you. If you had been with me, you would have been able fully to realize the great truth of the mission we have undertaken. To the majority of my countrymen the course of experience through which I passed will ever remain vague; and my appeal to them to view the history of our own country in the large background of humanity is not likely to carry any force. For my work I shall ever depend upon your comradeship, and therefore I feel sad that the reality of the ideal which has possessed me has missed its one signal chance of coming close to your heart. The perspective against which you have been recently setting up your scheme of life has been vastly different from mine. You have taken up responsibilities that may have to follow their own channels away from those that I shall have to choose; and the loneliness of my task, which has been my fatality in my past life, will follow me to the end of my days. But I must not complain. I shall follow the call of my providence, and I know that to respond to it in my own manner is fulfilment in itself, whatever may be its results.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 12th, 1921*

For the last fourteen months my one thought was to bring India into touch with the living activities of the larger world of humanity. It was not because I thought that India would be the sole gainer by this contact, but because I was certain that when the dormant mind of India was roused from its torpor she would be able to offer something for the needs of the human race which would be valuable.

Through different modes of political co-operation and non-co-operation India has assumed up to the present an attitude of asking boons from others. I have been dreaming of some form of co-operation through which she would be in a position to offer her own gifts to the world. In the West the mind of man is in full activity. It is vigorously thinking and working towards the solution of all the problems of life. This fullness of intellectual vigour itself gives its inspiration to mental vitality. But in our Indian Universities we simply have the results of this energy, not the living velocity itself. So our mind is burdened and not quickened by our education. This has made me realize that we do not want schoolmasters from the West, but fellow-workers in the pursuit of truth.

My own aspiration for my country is that the mind of India should join its forces to the great movement of mind which is in the present-day world. Every success that we may attain in this effort will at once lead us directly to feel the unity of Man. Whether the League of Nations acknowledges this unity or not, it is the same to us. We have to realize it through our own creative mind.

The moment that we take part in the building up of civilization we are instantly released from our own self-seclusion—from our mental solitary cell. We have not yet gained full confidence that we have the power to join hands with the great builders—the great workers of the world. Either our boastfulness breaks its voice in unnatural shrieking or our self-denunciation makes an abnormal display of itself in an aggressive flutter of humility.

But I am certain that we have every claim to this confidence, and that we must do everything to realize it. We do not want bragging; we need for ourselves the dignity of the man who knows that he has some purpose to fulfil for all people and for all time. This has made me bold to invite students and scholars from different parts of the world to an Indian University to meet there our students and scholars in a spirit of collaboration. I wonder if this idea of mine will find any response in the hearts of my countrymen of the present day.

S.S "MOREA," *July 13th, 1921*

In our music, each *ragini*[1] has its special scale in which some notes are absent and some are added, and the sequence of them is different in different *raginis*. The idea of India in my mind has its different *raginis*, presenting different aspects.

During my absence in the West my idea of India had its own special grouping of notes, and consequently the vision had its own special emotional value. When, in my travels, I was communicating with you, I had not the least notion that your India and mine were vastly different at that moment. I came to be aware of this fact when, at Aden, a number of Indian newspapers of different dates came into my hands, I felt, for the first time in these fourteen months, that I should have to make another attempt between my aspiration and my country.

But misgivings come to my mind as to whether any proper adjustment will be possible. I hate constant conflicts and bickerings—always to be shouting at the top of my voice in order to make myself heard above the shouts of other parties.

The India about which I had been dreaming belongs to the world. The India that I shall reach shortly belongs tremendously to itself. But which of these must I serve?

Months ago, while sitting each day at my window in a New York hotel, my heart had been aching morning after morning for the time of my return—the day that should bring me back to the arms of Mother India. But to-day my heart is sad—like this dark heaving sea, under the rainy sky. I have been wondering in my own mind, during the last few days, whether it was not my mission to remain in Europe at least another year, where I was asked to stay. But it is too late now. From this time forward I must make the effort to train my attitude of mind to a condition for which I am not ready.

[1] Mode or tune.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 14th, 1921*

There is an idealism which is a form of egotism egregiously self-assertive. The confidence which one has in one's own ideas may not arise from an unmixed love of truth. It may be a subtle form of bigotry of self. There is an idealism ready to kill freedom in others in order to find freedom for its own plan.

I feel, at times, afraid lest such a tyranny of idealism should ever take possession of my own mind. For it would mean that my faith in truth had grown weaker than my faith in myself. Pride of self insidiously creeps into our schemes for ameliorating the conditions of our fellow human beings; and when failure occurs, we are hurt because the schemes are *our* schemes.

Egotism of this kind is blindly oblivious of other people's missions in life. It tries to impose one vast monotony of taste upon individuals who have temperament and capacities fit for other kinds of work. It is like the tyranny of conscription which compels teachers to dig and poets to kill their fellow-men. This, being against God's own purpose, is terribly wasteful. In fact, all tyrants in idealism try to usurp the rights of Providence for their own purpose.

The gloom of sadness which has been brooding over my mind for the last few days must be the shadow of my own egotism, whose flame of hope is dimmed by a fear. For some months I had been feeling sure that everybody would think my thoughts and carry on my work. But this confidence in me and in my plan has suddenly found a check and I am apprehensive.

No, this is wrong for me, and it is also a source of wrong for others. Let me be glad because a great idea, with all its beauty and truth, has alighted upon my mind. I alone am responsible for carrying out its commands. It has its own wings of freedom to bear it to its own goal; and its call is music, and not an injunction. There is no failure for truth—failure is only for me—and what does that matter?

Henceforth I shall have the chance of talking with you face to face. Yet distance has its own significance, and letters have their power of speech which tongues do not possess. And therefore, when we meet, some part of our thoughts will remain unuttered for the want of a great space and silence between us.

S.S. "MOREA," *July 15th, 1921*

Before I finish this last letter to you, my friend, let me thank you with all my heart for your unfailing generosity in sending me letters all through my absence from India. They have been to me like a constant supply of food and water to a caravan travelling through a desert. I was sorely in need of them during the dreary months I spent in the United States. I promised to myself that I should try to pay you back in kind. I think I have kept my promise, and I hope you have got my letters in a regular weekly series, unless there have been gaps owing to the suspicions of professional eavesdroppers who watch over the destinies of the British Empire.

I suppose that the first few weeks I was lazy and depended upon Pearson to supply you with news, and therefore I am busy now in making up for the

deficits. But about one thing I can never hope to compete with you. As a letter-writer you are incomparable! Mine are no more letters than lobsters are fish. They are like fragments of a book; like meteors that are shot off a planet. They are shot at you, and with a flash most of them vanish into ashes; whereas yours come down like showers of rain upon the thirsty land. Yet you must consider one thing in my favour—it is that I am heavily handicapped in my race with you, because I write in a language that is not my own, and this greatly adds to the original inertia I always have to overcome in writing any letter in any language whatsoever. On the other hand, writing letters is as easy to you as it is easy for our *Sal* avenue to put forth its leaves in the beginning of the spring months. However, I wonder if even *you* will be able to cope with my correspondence on my return! It has grown amazingly exuberant. Good-bye.

APPENDIX I

[The following letter was sent to the Editor of the Manchester Guardian, *Mr C. P. Scott, by Rabindranath Tagore, with reference to his friend W. W. Pearson, and was published on November 27, 1923.]*

THE NEWS HAS reached us of W.W. Pearson's death through an accident which happened while he was travelling in Italy on the eve of his departure for India. He is not known to the wide public, but we feel sure that his loss is not merely a loss to the individuals who came into intimate touch with him. We seldom met with anyone whose love of humanity was so concretely real, whose ideal of service so assimilated to his personality, as it had been with him. The gift of friendliness, which he was ever ready to bestow upon the obscure, upon those who had nothing to attract the attention of their neighbours, was spontaneous in its generosity, completely free from all tinge of conscious or unconscious egotism, enjoying the luxury of the satisfied pride of goodness. The constant help which he rendered to those who were in need of it could have no reward in public recognition; it was as simple and silent as the daily fulfilling of his own personal requirements. His patriotism was for the world of man; he intimately suffered for all injustice or cruelty inflicted upon any people in any part of the earth, and in his chivalrous attempt to befriend them he bravely courted punishment from his own countrymen. He had accepted Santiniketan Asram for his home, where he felt he could realize his desire to serve the cause of humanity and express his love for India, which was deeply genuine in his nature, all his aspirations of life centring in her.

I know he has numerous friends in this country and outside India who admire the noble unselfishness of heart which he possessed, and who mourn his loss. I feel sure they will appreciate our idea of setting up some permanent memorial in his name in our Asram, which was so dear to him. He had a great desire to see the hospital in connection with our institution rebuilt and equipped in an adequate manner, for which he was working and contributing money whenever possible. I believe if we can carry out this wish of his and construct a hospital building, and a special ward for children attached to it, this will be the best form of perpetuating his memory, reminding us of his sympathy for those who suffer.

APPENDIX II

[*The following letter from the Poet to his friend W. W. Pearson was found among his papers and was too late for insertion in the last chapter of this volume. I have therefore included it as an appendix.*]

SANTINIKETAN, *July 4th, 1923*

I have just got your letter in which you ask me to give you my opinion concerning the importance of Institutional Religion.

As an abstract idea, I have nothing to say against it; for it is like the Caste System, perfect when ideally represented. Men can be classified according to their inherent differences in temperament. If all the natural Brahmins came together in order to carry on the special work which was only for them to perform, then through their mutual encouragement and co-operation an immensely potent force could be generated for the good of mankind. But directly a group is formed, its own group-personality almost invariably gives rise to an egoism which judges its own value by its external success and its physical duration. The Sect struggles for bigness and self-preservation even at the cost of truth. The growing consciousness of its own distinction and importance develops into a pride which—like the pride of wealth and office—becomes a temptation.

It is extremely difficult to become truly a Christian in conduct and life; but by following the easy path of belonging to a Christian Sect one seems to acquire the merit of being a Christian and also to have the right to despise even one's betters who by chance or by choice do not profess Christianity.

This has proved to be true of all religions which crystallize themselves into sectarianism. Religious communities are more often formed and established upon custom and the herd instinct than upon Truth. The children born to a Christian family are included in the religious community, not because they have shown in any way their fitness to belong to it, but because of the accident of birth. They do not have the time or the opportunity to discover their own individual inclination towards the religion they profess. They are persistently hypnotized into the belief that they are 'Christians.' For this reason we often witness the scene of men preaching Christianity as missionaries—or even as bishops—to their un-Christian fellow-beings, whom they might have killed as soldiers, or held down for ever under their heels as diplomats, had they followed their own true vocations.

An Institution which brings together individuals who are profoundly true and sincere in their common aspirations is a great help to all its members. But if, by its very constitution, it offers accommodation to those who merely have uniformity of habits and not unity of true faith, it necessarily becomes a breeding-place of hypocrisy and untruth. And because all organizations, by the very virtue of their power of combination, mechanically acquire a certain

amount of force, such untruths and hypocrisies find ready opportunity to create widespread mischief.

Christ, like all other spiritual personalities, was solitary in moral greatness. He had a pure relationship of love and truth with all humanity. His Spirit works in solitude in the depth of men's souls. Therefore we find great-hearted individuals on the side of those people who are oppressed and insulted. On the other hand, we often find the Christian Church on the side of those vested interests which are engaged in exploiting the weak. This happens because the Church, as an organization, is a power which has its own natural alliance with other powers that are not only non-religious but very often irreligious. In fact, it is ready to make its bargain with those very powers that crucified Christ.

It is a truism to say that the character of the majority of the members constituting a religious community determines the level of its ideals. For this cause an Institution which is indiscriminate in the choice of its materials, and possesses an inordinate greed for the augmentation of its own numbers, very often becomes merely the most efficient organ for expressing the collective passion of its members. Have you not noticed this in the time of the late European War? And does not the profession of a sectarian Christianity fashion in the time of peace a cloak of respectability which covers a multitude of sins?

I know that a community of God-seekers is a great shelter for man. But directly this grows into an Institution it is apt to give ready access to the Devil by its back-door.

Mahatmaji and the Depressed Humanity

RABINDRANATH'S TELEGRAM TO MAHATMAJI

Santiniketan, 19–9–32

Mahatma Gandhi, Yeravda Jail, Poona.

It is worth sacrificing precious life for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity. Though we cannot anticipate what effect it may have upon our rulers who may not understand its immense importance for our people we feel certain that the supreme appeal of such self offering to the conscience of our own countrymen will not be in vain. I fervently hope that we will not callously allow such national tragedy to reach its extreme length. Our sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

MAHATMAJI'S WIRE TO RABINDRANATH

Poona, 20–9–32

Gurudev, Santiniketan.

Have always experienced God's mercy. Very early this morning I wrote seeking your blessing if you could approve action, and behold I have it in abundance in your message just received. Thank you.

GANDHI

MAHATMAJI'S LETTER TO RABINDRANATH

CENSORED, *Sd./- Illegible, Major, I.M.S. Superintendent, Yeravda Central Prison*

Dear Gurudev,

This is early morning 3 o'clock of Tuesday. I enter the fiery gate at noon—If you can bless the effort, I want it. You have been to me a true friend because you have been a candid friend often speaking your thoughts aloud. I had looked forward to a firm opinion from you one way or the other. But you have refused to criticize. Though it can now only be during my fast, I will yet prize your criticism, if your heart condemns my action. I am not too proud to make an open confession of my blunder, whatever the cost of the confession, if I find myself in error. If your heart approves of the action I want your blessing. It will sustain me. I hope I have made myself clear. My love.

Y.C.P.

20 $^{9}/_{32}$ (Sd.) M.K. GANDHI

10–30 a.m.

Just as I was handing this to the Superintendent, I got your loving and magnificent wire. It will sustain me in the midst of the storm I am about to enter. I am sending you a wire. Thank you.

M.K.G

20TH SEPTEMBER*

A SHADOW IS darkening to-day over India like a shadow cast by an eclipsed sun. The people of a whole country is suffering from a poignant pain of anxiety the universality of which carries in it a great dignity of consolation. Mahatmaji who through his life of dedication has made India his own in truth has commenced his vow of extreme self-sacrifice.

Each country has its own inner geography where her spirit dwells and where physical force can never conquer even an inch of ground. Those rulers who come from outside remain outside the gate and directly they are called away from the cloud-topping tower of their foreign possessions the stupendous fabric of unreality vanishes into the void. But the great soul who achieves victory through the power of truth continues his dominion even when he is physically no longer present. And we all know such achievement belongs to Mahatmaji. And the fact that he has staked his life for a further and final realization of his hope fills us with awe and makes us think.

At this solemn moment we have a cause for fear. It is our unfortunate habit to reduce the truth that belongs to the inner spirit into signs and observances that are external and after a cheap welcome to bid it adieu. Our leaders have requested us to observe fasting for this day, and there is no harm in it. But there is the risk of some unthinking people putting it in the same category with the fasting that Mahatmaji has begun to observe. Nothing can be more disastrous for us than the utter lessening of the value of a heroic expression of truth by paying it the homage of a mere ceremonial expression of feeling by a people emotionally inclined.

The penance which Mahatmaji has taken upon himself is not a ritual, but a message to all India and to the world. If we must make that message our own we should accept it in right manner through proper process of realization. The gift of sacrifice has to be received in a spirit of sacrifice.

Let us try to understand the meaning of his message. From the beginning of human history there has continued the cleavage between classes, those favoured by circumstances exploiting the weakness of others and building the stronghold of their own pride of superiority upon the humiliation of a large section of the community. Though this practice has been prevalent for long yet we must assert that it is against the true spirit of man. No civilized society can thrive upon victims whose humanity has been permanently mutilated, whose minds have been compelled to dwell in the dark. Those whom we keep down inevitably drag us down and obstruct our movement in the path of progress. The indignity with which we burden them grows into an intolerable burden to the whole country; we insult our own humanity by insulting Man where he is helpless or where he is not of our own kin.

To-day there are thousands in India, confined in prisons indefinitely and without trial, inhumanly treated, and there can be no doubt that not only are

* Address to the staff and students of Santiniketan and Sriniketan.

they a heavy burden upon the Government but they permanently lower its dignity. The contemptuous vindictiveness ruthlessly pursued against prisoners whether political or belonging to other classes reveals the primitive barbarism lurking in the dark recesses of civilization, perpetually burdening it with hard problems and tainting its soul. We on our part in India have banished a considerable number of our own people into a narrow enclosure of insult branding them with the sign of permanent degradation. A dungeon does not solely consist of brick and mortar confinement, but setting narrow limits to man's self-respect is a moral prison more cruel for victims than the physical one and more demoralising for those who encourage it passively or with pious fervour.

The concrete fact of inequalities between individuals and races cannot be ignored, but to accept it as absolute and utilize it to deprive men of their human rights and comradeship is a social crime that multiplies fast in its heinousness. We who imagine ourselves superior to those whom we have tied down to their abasement are punished by enfeebling them and losing them from us. The weakness engendered by such alienation has been one of the principal causes of defeat in all our historical conflicts. Where numerous divisions have been made among the people by dark gaps of dishonour balance is upset and social structure is ever in danger of toppling over. The signs of such trials are not lacking in the Western Continents where the chasm between wealth and want is widening and is darkly nourishing earthquakes in its depth. The moral channels of communication should never be obstructed if man must be saved from degeneracy or destruction.

Mahatmaji has repeatedly pointed out the danger of those divisions in our country that are permanent insults to humanity, but our attention has not been drawn to the importance of its rectification with the same force as it has been to the importance of the Khadar. The social inequities upon which all our enemies find their principal support have our time-honoured loyalty making it difficult for us to uproot them. Against that deep-seated moral weakness in our society Mahatmaji has pronounced his ultimatum and though it may be our misfortune to lose him in the battlefield the fight will be passed on to every one of us to be carried on to the final end. It is the gift of the fight which he is going to offer to us and if we do not know how to accept it humbly and yet with proud determination, if we cheaply dismiss it with some ceremonials to which we are accustomed and allow the noble life to be wasted with its great meaning missed then our people will passively roll down the slope of degradation to the blankness of utter futility.

It is not possible for us to realize what effect Mahatmaji's action will have upon the people who govern us, and it is not for us today to discuss its political aspects.

Only one thing we must make clear to those who seem to have our destiny in their hands. We have observed that the English people are puzzled at the step that Mahatmaji has been compelled to take. They confess that they fail to understand it. I believe that the reason of their failure is mainly owing to the fact that the language of Mahatmaji is fundamentally different from their own.

His method of protest is not in accord with the method which they usually follow in cases of grave political crisis. I ask them to remember the terrible days of atrocities that reddened in blood at their door when a dismemberment was being forced between Ireland and the rest of Great Britain. Those Englishmen who imagined it to be disastrous to the integrity of their Empire did not scruple to kill and be killed, even to tear into shreds the decency of civilized codes of honour. The West is accustomed to such violent outbursts in times of desperation and therefore such a procedure did not seem strange to them though to some of them it must have appeared wrong. The dismemberment of a large portion of Hindu society is certainly fatal to its wholeness and when all our appeals are stubbornly dismissed the reason should not be incomprehensible to other people as to why Mahatmaji is voicing the extreme form of protest on behalf of India I ask them to imagine what would have happen-ed when the Roman Catholic community of England suffered from a forcible deprivation of its common rights, if some foreign power would come and with efficient benevolence alienate them from the rest of the nation. Very likely the people would resort to the method of protest which they consider as honourable in its red fury of violence. In our case the feeling may be similar though Mahatmaji has made use of its expression which is his own. The message of non-violence so often expressed by him in words and in deeds finds to-day its final exposition in a great language which should be easiest to understand.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

RABINDRANATH'S APPEAL TO COUNTRYMEN*

I APPEAL TO my countrymen that they must not delay a moment effectively to prove that they are in earnest to eradicate from their neighbourhood untouchability in all its ramifications. The movement should be universal and immediate, its expressions clear and indubitable. All manner of humiliation and disabilities from which any class in India suffers should be removed by heroic efforts and self sacrifice. Whoever of us fails in this time of grave crisis to try his utmost to avert the calamity facing India would be held responsible for one of the saddest tragedies that could happen to us and to the world.
22-9-32.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

TELEGRAM TO SRIJUT MAHADEV DESAI

Santiniketan, 23-9-32.

Mahadev Desai, Yeravda Jail, Poona.

Gurudeva eager start Poona if Mahatmaji has no objection. Wire health and if compromise reached.

AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

* Issued through Free Press and The Associated Press of India.

TELEGRAM TO SRIJUT MAHADEV DESAI

Santiniketan, 23–9–32.

Mahadev Desai. Yeravda Jail, Poona.

I try my hardest to keep my faith firm in ultimate victory of truth as expressed in a great life to be sacrificed for its cause, but my heart bleeds to think what it would cost our country and I struggle with all my power to convince myself that India can afford it in her present time of crisis. It is needless to tell you how anxious I am to know the details of Mahatmaji's condition.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

MAHATMAJI'S TELEGRAM TO RABINDRANATH

Poona, 23–9–32.

Gurudev, Santiniketan.

Have read your loving message to Mahadev also Amiya's. You have put fresh heart in me. Do indeed come if your health permits. Mahadev will send you daily wires. Talks about settlement still proceeding. Love. Will wire again if necessary.

GANDHI

WIRE FROM SJ. SATISH CH. DAS GUPTA

Poona, 23–9–32.

Gurudev, Santiniketan.

Mahadev wishes me express gratefulness your kind telegram and says in this battle between light and forces of darkness combined your presence near Gandhiji would be sure inspiration and healing balm.

SATIS DAS GUPTA

CABLEGRAM FROM SIR PRABHASHANKAR PATTANI

Rabindranath Tagore, Calcutta.

Shall be grateful for cabling real India situation address care India Office.

PATTANI

REPLY TO THE ABOVE

Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, India Office, London.

Whole country profoundly stirred by Mahatmaji's penance. Sweeping reforms proceeding apace. Every chance of the palpably unjust Communal Award being rectified by our own people.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

WITH MAHATMAJI IN POONA*

WE LEFT FOR Poona with hope in our hearts even though the atmosphere was tense with foreboding. The journey is long, giving time for anxious thoughts to dwell on what may await us at the end. My companions buy newspapers at every big railway stall—the news is not encouraging. Mahatmaji, according to the physicians, seems to have definitely entered the danger zone, his muscles yielding now that his naturally meagre surplus of fat has almost been exhausted. Apoplexy may result any time. Discussions with different groups, prolonged and intricate, continue all these days mercilessly to exact his best energies. And yet Mahatmaji has indeed triumphed, curbing intense physical agony and mental strain with an unbending will. Compromise seems to have been achieved, retaining the depressed communities within the Hindu fold, and frustrating attempts to create divisions by the separate electorate award. The final resolution is now with the British Cabinet though there is no reasonable ground for their withholding sanction as the Prime Minister has already committed himself to accept what our own communities may jointly recognize as just.

Wavering between hope and fear, we reached Kalyan on the 26th September morning. We met Srimati Basanti and Urmila on the platform—they had arrived some hours before by the B.N. Ry. Mail. Without delay we started for Poona by the car which our hostess there had sent for us.

The hilly road through the Western Ghats is picturesque. Entering the city of Poona we found armoured cars and machine guns being manoeuvred on the military grounds; soldiers paraded along the city roads. Lady Thackersay herself graciously received us at her doorstep; as we went up the stairs to our rooms the girls of her school standing on either side welcomed us with songs and ceremonial garland, and sandal-paste.

Entering the house I had sensed anxiety in the air; there was a shadow of suspense in every face. On questioning I found that Mahatmaji's condition was precarious. No answer had come from London. I sent an urgent cable to the Premier.

There was no need for sending it. Soon the rumour reached us that the expected news had arrived. But we had no means of verifying that rumour till many hours later.

Today is Mahatmaji's day of silence. He has expressed his desire to break it with me at one o'clock. On our way to the Yeravda prison, at some distance from the gate, our car was stopped—a sentry on duty had been asked not to let any car pass till further orders. I had thought that in India now-a-days the road towards the jail entrance is generous. Round our car gathered a medley crowd.

As a gentleman from our side proceeded to obtain sanction from the prison authorities Sriman Devadas came along in a car, the jail-permit in his

*Talk to staff and students of Visva-bharati on returning from Poona. Rabindranath left for Poona on the 24th September by the E.I. Ry Bombay Mail with Sj. Surendranath Kar and Amiya Chakravarty.

hand. Later on I heard that Mahatmaji had felt that our car had been obstructed in the way—though he had no information on that point—and sent his son to fetch us.

Big iron doors swung wide open one after the other and closed behind us. To our front is the arrogance of high walls, a fettered sky, straight cut metalled roads projecting ahead, a few trees.

Two major experiences of my life have come rather late. Recently I have crossed the threshold of the University; and in spite of a slight obstruction here am I today inside a regular prison house.

Climbing a few steps to the left and passing through a door I enter a walled-in enclosure with two blocks of cells, some distance apart. In the middle courtyard under the thick shade of a young mango tree lies Mahatmaji on his bed.

Mahatmaji drew me near to himself, and kept me there for some time. He expressed deep joy in seeing me.

I praised my luck for having come on the crest of good news. It was nearly half past one. The message from London had by now spread all over India, and it had even been discussed at the Assembly—so I heard later. The newspaper men had also known of it. There seems only to have been no hurry in saving him whose life-stream hour by hour was rapidly dwindling into a vanishing point. One felt surprised at the cruelly tortuous length of Red Tape. Upto four in the afternoon our anxiety mounted higher. One hears that the information had arrived in official Poona at 10 a.m.

On all sides are friends. I recognized among them Mahadev, Vallabhbhai, Rajagopalachari, Rajendraprasad. Srimati Kasturibai and Sarojini as well as Jawaharlal's wife Kamala were there.

Mahatmaji's slender body was emaciated to a degree, his voice was barely audible. He was being given water with soda to counteract the growing acidity in his stomach. The responsibility of his physicians was grave.

Yet his inner vigour was undiminished, intellectual flow active, his radiant personality as ever tireless. From before his fast difficult problems had weighed on his mind; he had carried on intricate discussions; his correspondence with politicians across the seas must have been a harsh experience. During his fast, as every one knows, claims and clamour of different parties have not spared him. Not a sign, however, of mental fatigue, not the slightest shadow was there to obscure the lucid language of his thoughts. Transcending the extreme rigours of his body this great manifestation of his invincible soul was before us moving us to profound admiration. I could hardly have fully realized how great is the strength of this frail man had I not come near to him like this.

Today to millions of hearts in India have reached the message of this immortal spirit resting under the shadow of death's altar. No barriers could stand in its way, those of distance, of brick and mortar, of hostile politics. The obstruction of century-old inertia has crumbled before it into dust.

Mahadev said that Mahatmaji had been keenly awaiting my arrival. I cannot offer any help in the solution of political problems, for I lack necessary

experience and inclination; but I am happy to have given him some satisfaction by my personal presence.

We move on to a distance as it would tire him to be surrounded. We patiently await for the message to arrive. The afternoon light arches over the bare high walls. In groups, white Khaddar clothed men and women quietly hold discussions. Noticeable is the disciplined calm of this gathering inside the jail. No hint is there of unguarded behaviour taking advantage of relaxed regulations. This strength of character naturally evokes trust, the prison authorities therefore have respectfully allowed them unhampered to mix with each other. They have not accepted any privileges transgressing Mahatmaji's implied assurance to the authorities. The dignity of natural self-respect is theirs; one can easily understand that they fully deserve the responsibility which rests on them to establish India's Swaraj on unflinching service of Truth.

At last with the Government's red sealed envelope in hand appears the Inspector General of Prisons. There seems to be a hint of happiness in his face. Slowly Mahatmaji reads the document. I asked Sarojini to request others to move away from him now. After he has finished reading, Mahatmaji calls his friends to discuss the communication amongst themselves and expresses his wish that it should be shown to Dr Ambedkar.

This letter is pondered over; I too read it. A production of diplomatic minds, it needs careful perusal. One understands that it does not go against Mahatmaji's wishes. Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru is deputed to explain the document in detail to Mahatmaji. His clear analysis leaves no room for doubt in Mahatmaji's mind. The great penance of the fast is now over.

Mahatmaji's cot is removed near to the shade of the prison wall. Spreading the jail blankets the gathering is seated. The lemon juice is prepared by Srimati Kamala Nehru; according to the request of the Inspector General of Prisons, it is to be given to Mahatmaji by Srimati Kasturibai. Mahadev tells me that my Gitanjali song "When the heart is dried and parched up. . . ." is a favourite of Mahatmaji's. I had forgotten the tune which once I gave it; I sing it to an improvised tune. Pandit Shyam Shastri reads out from the Vedas. Srimati Kasturibai hands over to Mahatmaji the glass of fruit juice which he takes and slowly sips. Then the members of Sabarmati Ashram and others sing in chorus the hymn "Vaishnava Jana Ko". Fruits and sweets are disturbed, we all partake of it.

Within gaol barricades this great festival takes place. Nevei has happened such an event in human history. The *Jajna* (the sacrificial rite) was begun inside the prison and here too is reached its great fulfilment.

At night Pandit Kunzru and other notable leaders now assembled in Poona came to me with the request that I should preside at the mammoth meeting to be held tomorrow to celebrate Mahatmaji's birthday anniversary. Pundit Malaviya, they said, would arrive tomorrow from Bombay. Punditji, I proposed, should preside, I would read out a short address in which I would try adequately to express my own sentiments. It was impossible not to consent

to join even a big gathering on an occasion so auspicious, overruling considerations of my age and health.

Next evening in the open grounds of Sivaji Mandir a vast gathering had met to do honour to their master. With difficulty, I entered wondering what would happen about subsequent exit. Malaviyaji in his chaste Hindi explained beautifully that our scriptures never support class or racial discrimination in the name of religion; quoting chapter and verse he proved his thesis. I knew it was impossible for my voice any more to make itself audible to a meeting of this size. So I spoke a few words; Sriman Govind Malaviya, son of Punditji undertook to read out the text of my address. It was surprising to find that he could do it so perfectly considering that the evening light was dim and that he saw the paper now for the first time.

My written speech has already appeared fully in the papers. Just before coming to the meeting I had gone to Yeravda prison and presented it to Mahatmaji.

Mrs Motilal Nehru addressing her brothers and sisters said that they should never pause in their fight against untouchability which was a blot on the fair name of our civilization. Srijukta Rajagopalachari, Rajendraprasad, and other leaders exhorted their audience with great feeling to remove this evil which was disrupting our society and thwarting at every step our larger aspirations. Srijut Rajagopalachari wanted to take with him a birthday present for Mahatmaji in his jail. Let it be their promise never again to tolerate untouchability in their lives. At the end of the meeting the entire audience raising their hands accepted the vow of purifying our social life of grave wrongs that humiliate our humanity. It was evident that the message of today had reached the hearts of our audience—it would have been impossible even a few days before for thousands of men and women to accept unanimously such a difficult resolve.

My work is done. Next morning I spent many hours with Mahatmaji. Pundit Malaviya and myself had long discussions with him on a wide range of subjects. In a day Mahatmaji had regained unexpected physical strength, his voice was firmer, his blood pressure nearly normal. Visitors pour in with greetings of devoted love, to take the dust of his feet. He talks smilingly with each person. Children come with gifts of flowers, how happy he is with them. Discussions continue with his friends on social problems. His great concern now is to achieve a harmony between our two great communities, the Hindus and Mahomedans.

His great life which today luminously reveals itself on a large background has brought to us the message of discovering man the Great in all humanity. May this message be fulfilled. The true path to emancipation lies in man's unity; our political dependence is nourished by the innumerable sects and divisions that keep our peoples apart. The day has come when human civilization must move forward breaking through the fetters of the Ages—towards broader understanding based on mutual faith and love.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

CABLE FROM C.F. ANDREWS

London, 24–9–32.

Rabindranath Tagore, Poona.
Marvellous result appearing.
Dearest Love
Tell Bapu.

CHARLIE

MAHATMAJI BREAKS FAST

WIRE FROM POONA

Poona, 26–9–32.

Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan.

Mahatmaji broke fast five p.m. Gurudeva spent four hours Yeravda Jail, sang just before breaking fast. Will visit Mahatmaji again tomorrow. Great rejoicing.

AMIYA; SUREN

CABLE FROM C.F. ANDREWS

London, 26–9–32.

Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan.
Thank God Mahatma's life is spared.

CHARLIE

MESSAGE ON MAHATMAJI'S BIRTHDAY

Poona, 27–9–32.

ON THIS DAY of our rejoicing over our reconciliation with the depressed classes of India we still suffer from a bitter sense of disappointment for not being able to realize the confidence of our Mahomedan brethren which is so absolutely necessary for the fulfilment of our national life. We assure them that the great fight which has recently been taken up by our country against the inequitous custom of untouchability has not made us forget the greater ordeal of purification through which India must pass in order to bring together the two great neighbours Hindus and Mahomedans in a perfect spirit of trust and co-operation. Both communities must be united in a bond of comradeship and stand side by side in the arduous adventure of India's freedom which to be real must come from within the heart of our common humanity and build on the basis of uncompromising honesty and love.

I heartily endorse the statement which Mahatmaji has sent to the Press and I appeal to our countrymen that they must never pause till the evils of disparity and discord are completely rooted out from the soil of India. Let us

today take upon ourselves, all men and women of India, this great task which lies before us and dare meet the challenge which it has sent from one end of our country to the other.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

ON MAHATMAJI'S BIRTHDAY*

MAHATMAJI'S BIRTHDAY appears today before us in awful majesty of death which has just left him victorious.

Ordinarily men are born to a limited neighbourhood where related to their kinsmen they carry on the course of their common-place life till they die. Every year they also enjoy their special day which assures them of their birth right of a seat in the hearts of their few friends and relations.But great souls are born into a large sphere of life, they are acknowledged by peoples and nations; in celebrating their birthday we not only realize them to be our own for all time, but through them feel our spiritual intimacy with the world of Man. They extend the range of our personal self, giving it a universal background, the significance of eternal humanity.

It is our great good fortune today that such a man has indeed come to us and what is still rarer that we have not repudiated him as we have so often done with the messengers of freedom and truth. His inspiration is actively in work all through India and even beyond its boundaries; it has awakened our consciousness to a truth which goes far beyond the limits of our self-interest. His life itself is a constant call to us to emancipation in service and self-dedication.

Today is the day of our national acknowledgement of Mahatmaji as the great brother who in the present age is the central bond of our brotherhood in our Motherland. I hope we shall be earnestly solemn in our expression of it and never cheapen the meaning of this occasion by merely indulging in emotional pride. Let us be worthy of the call of this Age and accept from Mahatmaji's hand the responsibility which he has accepted for himself.

We know in the Upanishads, God who ever dwells in the hearts of all men has been mentioned as Mahatma. The epithet is rightly given to the man of God whom we are honouring today, for his dwelling is not within the narrow enclosure of individual consciousness, his dwelling is in the heart of untold multitudes who are born today in India and who are yet to come. And this greatness of his soul which has the power to comprehend other souls has made possible what never has yet happened in our history when even the masses have been roused to the great fact that India is not merely a geographical entity but is a living truth, in which they live and move and have their being.

Today in our determined effort to join Mahatmaji in his noble task of removing the burden of Ages, the burden of disrespect upon the bent back of

* Speech delivered at Sivaji Mandir, Poona on 27 September 1932.

those who have been stigmatized for the accident of their birth, the sin of wilful denial to a large body of our countrymen of sympathy which is the birthright of all human beings—we are not only casting off the chain of India's moral enslavement but indicating a path for all humanity. We are challenging victimisation wherever and in whatever form it may exist, to stand the test of relentless questioning of conscience which Mahatmaji has brought to bear upon our day.

When Mahatmaji began his penance there were cynics in our own country and abroad who mocked and jeered at him. And yet before our very eyes the wonder has happened. Hard rocks of tradition have been blasted, irrational prohibitions cramping our national life are already showing signs of tottering. Great has been the achievement due to his penance but it will be a greater glory to him and to us if we can fulfil his vow by fighting to the finish the evils of untouchability, of intolerance, of all that hinders the comradeship of man and man and obstructs our path to freedom and righteousness.

My friends, I appeal to you, do not betray your great man and your own humanity by any deviation of your initiative from the pursuit of justice and love towards your fellowmen who have suffered humiliation for ages and remained dumb in a pathetic apathy of resignation never even blaming providence and their own cruel destiny. But the angry voice has at last come from the divine guide of our history with its warning message that they cut at the root of freedom who in their unreasoning pride obstruct the freedom of social communication among their own kindreds.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

CABLE FROM SIR PRABHASHANKAR PATTANI

Geneve, 29-9-32.

Dr Rabindranath Tagore, Santiniketan.

Thanks for cabling. Thank God India has risen to its culture and communal peace is restored through Gandhiji's penance. He wired to us here that Gurudev was tower of strength at this juncture.

PATTANI

LETTER TO MIRA BEN, ARTHUR ROAD PRISON, BOMBAY

Santiniketan, 1-10-32.

Dear Mira,

Mahatmaji showed me your letter which gave us both great joy. We missed you very much indeed but knew that you were with us in spirit in those anxious moments of suffering and the happiness that followed.

I found Mahatmaji much better when I left and hope that he is now

gradually coming back to normal health. My pilgrimage to Poona has been auspicious throughout.

Yours affectionately,
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

LETTER FROM MIRA BEN

Arthur Road Prison, Bombay, 17–10–32

Revered Gurudev.

How happy I was to receive your loving letter.

From the day I read in the paper that you had started for Yeravda from Santiniketan I kept thinking of the joy your coming would give to Bapu. I counted the days and hours, and felt how you were going to get there just at the moment when the Fast would be broken. I pictured it all in my mind just as, I heard afterwards, it had all happened.

It helped me to bear the terrible strain of those hours.

And now I get such cheering letters from Bapu—full of thankfulness and hope. His health too, seems to have recovered in a wonderful way.

As I watch the developments which are following the Fast, my heart overflows with thanksgiving to God.

Ever affectionately,
Yours MIRA

MAHATMAJI'S STATEMENT ON BREAKING FAST*

THE FAST TAKEN in the name of God was broken in His name in the presence of Gurudev and the leper prisoner Parachure Shastri, a learned Pandit, seated opposite each other, and a company of loving and loved ones who had gathered round me. The breaking was preceded by the Poet singing one of his Bengali hymns, then mantras from the Upanishads by Parachure Shastri, and my favourite hymn 'Vaishnavajana Te.' The hand of God has been visible in the glorious manifestation throughout the length and breadth of India during the past seven days. Cables received from many parts of the world, blessing the fast, have sustained me through the agony of the body, mind and soul that I passed through during the seven days.

But the cause was worth going through that agony, and the sacrificial fire once lit shall not be put out till there is the slightest trace of untouchability still left in Hinduism; and if it is God's will that it does not end with my life, I have confidence that there are several thousands of earnest reformers who will lay down their lives in order to purify Hinduism of this awful curse.

* Issued on 26 September evening.

The settlement arrived at, so far as I can see, is a generous gesture on all sides. It is a meeting of hearts, and my Hindu gratitude is due to Dr Ambedkar, Rao Bahadur Srinivasan and their party on the one hand and Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah on the other. They could have taken up an uncompromising and defiant attitude by way of punishment to the so-called Caste Hindus for the sins of generations. If they had done so, I at least could not have resented their attitude and my death would have been but a trifling price exacted for the tortures that the outcasts of Hinduism have been going through for unknown generations. But they chose a nobler path and have thus shown that they have followed the precept of forgiveness enjoined by all religions. Let me hope that the Caste Hindus will prove themselves worthy of this forgiveness and carry out to the letter and spirit every clause of the settlement with all its implications.

The settlement is but the beginning of the end. The political part of it, very important though it no doubt is, occupies but a small space in the vast field of reform that has to be tackled by Caste Hindus during the coming days, namely the complete removal of social and religious disabilities under which a large part of the Hindu population has been groaning.

I should be guilty of a breach of trust, if I do not warn fellow reformers and Caste Hindus in general that the breaking of the fast carried with it a sure promise of its resumption, if this is not relentlessly pursued and achieved within a measurable period. I had thought of laying down a period, but I feel that I may not do so without a definite call from within. The message of freedom shall penetrate every 'untouchable' home, and that can only happen if reformers will cover every village. And yet in the wave of enthusiasm and in an inordinate desire to spare me the repetition of the agony there should be no coercion. We must, by patient toil and self-suffering, convert the ignorant and superstitious but never seek to compel them by force.

I wish too that the almost ideal solution that has been arrived at may be followed by the other communities and that we might see a dawn of a new era of mutual trust, mutual give and take, and a recognition of the fundamental unity of all communities.

I would here single out the Hindu-Moslem-Sikh question. I am the same to the Musalman today that I was in 1920–1922. I should be just as prepared to lay down my life as I was in Delhi to achieve an organic unity and permanent peace between them, and I hope and pray that there will be, as a result of this upheaval, a spontaneous move in this direction, and then surely the other communities can no longer stand out.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Government and the jail staff and the medical men appointed by the Government to look after me. Extreme care and attention was bestowed upon me. Nothing was left undone. The jail staff worked under terrible pressure and I observed that they did not grudge this labour. I thank them all from high to low.

I thank the British Cabinet for hastening the decision on the settlement. The terms of the decision sent to me, I have not approached without misgivings. It accepts, I suppose, very naturally only that part of the Agreement

that refers to the British Cabinet's communal decision. I expect that they had constitutional difficulty in now announcing their acceptance of the whole agreement.

But I would like to assure my Harijan friends, as I would like henceforth to name them, that so far as I am concerned, I am wedded to the whole of that agreement and that they may hold my life as hostage for its due fulfilment unless we ourselves arrive at any other and better settlement of our own free will.

M.K. GANDHI

East and West

GILBERT MURRAY – RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Yatscombe, Boar's Hill, Oxford,
August 17th, 1934

My dear Tagore

I VENTURE TO trouble you with this letter for several reasons. First, you are a great poet, probably the most famous poet now living in the world, and poetry is to me almost the chief pleasure and interest in life. Your life and work are inspired by a spirit of harmony, and it is in the interest of harmony between man and man that I make my appeal. You are a Thinker, and in this distracted world, where nation stands armed against nation and the old liberal statesmanship of the nineteenth century seems to have given way to a blind temper of competition, I cannot but look to the Thinkers of the world to stand together, not in one nation but in all nations, reminding all who care to listen of the reality of human brotherhood and the impossibility of basing a durable civilized society on any foundation save peace and the will to act justly.

All generalizations about whole nations or groups of nations are superficial and inaccurate, even when made by scientific students without personal bias. And most of these actually current are made by prejudiced and utterly unscientific partisans. People talk loosely of the difference in character between "Nordic" and "Latin" nations, or, in still looser phrase, between "East" and "West", violently denouncing the one and praising the other. Even when there is no actual prejudice at work, the comparisons, though sometimes suggestive, are never exact. For one thing, neither side of the comparison is uniform: every German is different from every other German, every Italian from every other Italian : nor can you make any single statement that will be true of all Indians or of all Englishmen. And besides, the differences of habits and ways of thought between, say, one fairly typical Bengali and one typical Yorkshireman, are so infinite in number that they cannot be added together in a definite catalogue, and for the most part so utterly unimportant that they would not be worth cataloguing. I am always puzzled by the people who ask me "Do I like Indians", or it may be Americans, or Frenchmen : and can only answer, as I would about my own countrymen, that I like some and do not like others.

Yet the differences are there, and are felt though they cannot be analysed. Indeed the mischief is that they are felt far too much; infinitesimal peculiarities are noted and interpreted as having some great moral significance. We are accustomed to our own people and do not seek for profound psychological explanations of their chance looks and ways. But when we meet a foreigner we feel a surge of curiosity and criticism rising within us. We want eagerly to know what this strange being is really like, and we have so little evidence to go upon that we exaggerate the importance of all we have. A

slightly louder voice, a less ceremonious address, a ruddier face, will suggest insolence and brutality: the opposite will seem to be symptoms of timidity and insincerity. Similarly, an act of courtesy to which we are not accustomed will be gratefully remembered for years; a breach of the sort of courtesy which we expect will be furiously resented. And, inevitably when this course of ingenious misinterpretation is once begun, it is easy to get abundant confirmation of all one's prejudices. It is said to be, in point of law, impossible to draw an indictment against a nation : as a matter of literature, it is only too easy. One could write a "Mother India" about every nation—an appalling indictment, and false as a whole, while every statement in it might be true. I remember an English newspaper in the 90's which, finding nothing more mischievous to do at the moment, used to collect and publish a list of all the crimes committed by members of the French army. And since the French army was very large the crimes were proportionately numerous, and the effect as horrifying as the editor desired. Many of us read a famous German scholar's book, "England", published during the war. It dwelt upon the disgusting faults of the English and the merits of the writer's own countrymen, and perhaps, in the long run, it was as useful to us as it was harmful to them. But of course the whole method of such books is wrong. The first step towards international understanding must be a recognition that our own national habits are not the unfailing canon by which those of other peoples must be judged, and that the beginning of all improvement must be a certain reasonable humility.

It is not hard, in theory at least, to make this first step. Indeed it is a duty generally recognised by English Liberals. The historical works of my friend, Edward Thompson, on Indian subjects are an example. But it is hard indeed to carry out consistently, and even to begin needs some imaginative effort.

An Indian friend of mine once told me that as a small child he had been taught to regard the Englishman as something scarcely human, a kind of Demon, which had every day both to shed blood and be drugged with alcohol, or else its rage became terrible. This, I suppose, was strictly true, at any rate of some average British officers on a hunting expedition. They did expect every day to shed blood and to cheer themselves with alcohol—two acts which to my Indian friend were equally abominable; and I can quite believe that their tempers wore rather thin when they were disappointed of either. Yet no doubt, apart from this little weakness for blood and alcohol, they were excellent people.

I remember many years ago a visit of yours to England, when a number of people met to give you a public welcome in some hall in London, and, among other features in the entertainment, an English singer sang one of your poems. It was a gentle philosophical poem, dependent for its whole effect upon a spirit of quiet and calm. I should have liked to hear it spoken to the accompaniment of some antique stringed instrument like a harp or a cithara. But on this occasion it had been set to modern European music of a *bravura* style, and when the singer began, her piercing soprano made me wince. I looked to see how you were bearing it. No doubt you suffered, but you were

the centre of all eyes and your statuesque courtesy was undisturbed.

Yes, the differences are there: they are real and perhaps to a certain extent they are national or racial, though not so much as people imagine. I was once on a Committee where a certain Indian member was making himself very tiresome (there are tiresome Indians as well as tiresome Europeans) by his touchiness and vanity. And a wise old Japanese friend of mine told me afterwards how he had wondered within himself: "Is that sort of behaviour Asiatic, and ought I to feel ashamed? Or is it Indo-European, so that I am left untouched?" Of course it was neither. It was only human. There are touchy and vain people in all parts of the world, just as there are criminals in all parts; just as there are thinkers, artists, poets, men of learning; just as there are saints and sages. And it is valuable to remember that, as Plato pointed out long ago, while criminals tend to cheat and fight one another, and stupid people to misunderstand one another, there is a certain germ of mutual sympathy between people of good will or good intelligence. An artist cannot help liking good art, a poet good poetry, a man of science good scientific work, from whatever country it may spring. And that common love of beauty or truth, a spirit indifferent to races and frontiers, ought, among all the political discords and antagonisms of the world, to be a steady well-spring of good understanding, a permanent agency of union and brotherhood.

There is no need for sentimentality, no need for pretence. If I enjoy the beauty of your poetry, if I sympathize with your rejection of honours from a government which you had ceased to respect, that makes already a sufficient bond between us: there is no need for me to share, or pretend to share, or make a great effort to share, your views on every subject, or because I admire certain things that are Indian to turn round and denounce Western Civilization. Men of imagination appreciate what is different from themselves: that is the great power which imagination gives. For example, I have just been reading your play called in French "La Machine", and see in it, if I am not mistaken, your hatred of machines as such, and of all the mechanization of modern life. Now I happen to admire machines and the engineers who make them. I respect their educational influence. I feel that if a boy's horse or dog will not do what he wants he will probably try to make it do so by losing his temper and beating it; but if his bicycle or his wireless will not work, he knows it is no good losing his temper. He has to think and work, to find out what is wrong and to put it right: which is a priceless lesson for any boy. Then the use of machinery teaches conscientiousness to the mechanic. I often think of the thousands and thousands of aeroplanes that are plying their daily tasks throughout Europe and America; each one of them consisting of thousands and thousands of parts, every single one of which must be properly adjusted and made fast by the workmen before the machine starts. A mistake, almost any mistake, is quite likely to be fatal. But the engineers, quite ordinary men for the most part, are so trained that they do not make a mistake, and the rest of us have such confidence in their accuracy and conscientiousness that we travel in their aeroplanes freely and without a qualm. This seems to me a quite wonderful

fact, that masses of men should have been made so trustworthy and reliable. It is the Age of Machines that, for the first time in history, has made them so. I write this not to argue but merely to illustrate; to show that difference of opinion, habit or training need not cause alienation. You can remain profoundly Indian and I a regular westerner, without disturbance to our mutual sympathy.

I even believe in the healthiness and high moral quality of our poor distressed civilization. It made the most ghastly war in history, but it hated itself for doing so. As a result of the war it is now full of oppressions, cruelties, stupidities and public delusions of a kind which were thought to be obsolete and for ever discarded a century ago. But I doubt if ever before there was what theologians would call such a general sense of sin, such widespread consciousness of the folly and wickedness in which most nations and governments are involved, or such a determined effort, in spite of failure after failure, to get rid at last of war and the fear of war and all the baseness and savagery which that fear engenders. I still have hope for the future of this tortured and criminal generation: perhaps you have lost hope and perhaps you will prove right. But the divergence of view need make no rift between us.

My beloved and admired colleague, Mme Curie, when she threw herself into the work of Intellectual Co-operation, gave one special reason for doing so. She had seen, during the World War, how often the intellectual leaders in the various nations had been not better but, if anything, worse than the common people in the bitterness and injustice of their feelings. She had seen that this was a great evil and one that could be remedied. The artists and thinkers, the people whose work or whose words move multitudes, ought to know one another, to understand one another, to work together at the formation of some great League of Mind or Thought independent of miserable frontiers and tariffs and governmental follies, a League or Society of those who live the life of the intellect and through the diverse channels of art or science aim at the attainment of beauty, truth and human brotherhood.

I need not appeal to you, Tagore, to join in this quest; you already belong to it; you are inevitably one of its great leaders. I only ask you to recognize the greatness of your own work for the intellectual union of East and West, of thinker with thinker and poet with poet, and to appreciate the work that may be done by the intellectuals of India not merely for their own national aims, however just and reasonable they may be; there is a higher task to be attempted in healing the discords of the political and material world by the magic of that inward community of spiritual life which even amid our worst failures reveals to us Children of Men our brotherhood and our high destiny.

Believe me, with deep respect,

Yours sincerely,
GILBERT MURRAY.

"Uttarayan" Santiniketan, Bengal
September 16th, 1934

My dear Professor Murray

In the midst of my busy seclusion in a corner of this Educational Colony in India comes your letter bearing its call for close understanding of the problems that face our common humanity. I have no difficulty in responding to your friendly voice, for it is not only the voice of a friend whom I have the privilege to know and love; but it also carries the highest authority of European culture and scholarship, and is therefore eminently fitted to represent the great humanity of Europe.

I must confess at once that I do not see any solution of the intricate evils of disharmonious relationship between nations, nor can I point out any path which may lead us immediately to the levels of sanity. Like yourself, I find much that is deeply distressing in modern conditions, and I am in complete agreement with you again in believing that at no other period of history has mankind as a whole been more alive to the need of human co-operation, more conscious of the inevitable and inescapable moral links which hold together the fabric of human civilization. I cannot afford to lose my faith in this inner spirit of Man, nor in the sureness of human progress which following the upward path of struggle and travail is constantly achieving, through cyclic darkness and doubt, its ever-widening ranges of fulfilment. Willingly therefore I harness myself, in my advanced age, to the arduous responsibility of creating in our Educational Colony in Santiniketan a spirit of genuine international collaboration based on a definite pursuit of knowledge, a pursuit carried on in an atmosphere of friendly community life, harmonized with Nature, and offering freedom of individual self-expression. This work which I have to continue in the face of desperately adverse circumstance, has yet struck root in the soil of India, and sent out its branches to a wider arena of humanity, and it carries, I believe, a very deep affinity with the activities of the League of Intellectual Co-operation with which I am already associated.

My occasional misgivings about the modern pursuit of Science is directed not against Science, for Science itself can be neither good or evil, but its wrong use. If I may just touch here on your reference to machines, I would say that machines should not be allowed to mechanize human life but contribute to its wellbeing, which as you rightly point out, it is constantly doing when it is man's sanity which controls the use of machinery.

I would like here to quote a passage from one of my writings published in April 1929 which I think may interest you. You will find that it is impossible for me not to accept the true spirit of Science as a pure expression of the creative soul of man.

"Personally I do not believe that Europe is occupied only with material things. She may have lost her faith in religion, but not in humanity. Man, in his essential nature, is spiritual and can never remain solely material. If, however, we in the East merely realize Europe in this external aspect, we shall be seriously at fault. For in Europe the ideals of human activity are truly of the

soul. They are not paralyzed by shackles of scriptural injunctions. Their sanction lies in the heart of man and not in something external to him.

"It is this attitude of mind in Europe which is essentially spiritual .....

"When the aeroplane goes up in the sky, we may wonder at it as the perfection of material power; but behind this lies the human spirit, strong and alive. It is this spirit of man which has refused to recognize the boundaries of nature as final. Nature has put the fear of death in man's mind to moderate his power within the limits of safety; but man in Europe has snapped his fingers at Death and torn asunder the bonds. Only then did he earn the right to fly—a right of the gods.

"But even here the adverse forces—the Titans—are alive, who are ready to rain down death from the air. But the Titans are not in sole possession. In Europe, there is a constant war between the gods and the Titans. Often the Titans are victorious; but the victory is sometimes with the gods ....."

What really must concern us in our generalization or in our detailed study of truth is, as you indicate, a sincere recognition of reality and an unflinching loyalty to it.

May I therefore, in trying to pursue the middle path of harmony, deal with some details of our present problems of India, and also put them in relation to the larger aspect of international relationship as I view it. In offering you gleanings from my thoughts covering a number of my mature years of experience, I may perhaps help in clearing up, to a certain extent, the nature of some of our vital problems. On the clear recognition of these internal as well as international problems must depend the possibility of genuine understanding and co-operation both between the different communities of India and between India as a whole and Europe. This, I believe, is also the guiding principle of the League of Nations which has asserted itself time and again in spite of the pressure of political vicissitudes.

II

Now that mutual intercourse has become easy, and the different peoples and nations of the world have come to know one another in various relations, one might have thought that the time had arrived to merge their differences in a common unity. But the significant thing is, that the more the doors are opening and the walls breaking down outwardly, the greater is the force which the consciousness of individual distinction is gaining within. There was a time when we believed that men were remaining separate, because of the obstacles between them; but the removal of these, to the largest possible extent, is not seen to have the effect of doing away with the differences between diverse sections of mankind.

Individuality is precious, because only through it we can realize the universal. Unfortunately there are people who take enormous pride in magnifying their speciality and proclaiming to the world that they are fixed for ever on their pedestal of uniqueness. They forget that only discords are

unique and therefore can claim their own separate place outside the universal world of music.

It should be the function of religion to provide us with this universal ideal of truth and maintain it in its purity. But men have often made perverse use of their religion, building with it permanent walls to ensure their own separateness. Christianity, when it minimises its spiritual truth, which is universal, and emphazises its dogmatic side, which is a mere accretion of time, has the same effect of creating a mental obstruction which leads to the misunderstanding of people who are outside its pale. A great deal of the unmerited contempt and cruelty, which the non-western peoples have suffered in their political, commercial or other relations at the hands of the West, is owing to sectarian calumnies with which even the western children's text books are contaminated. Nevertheless this sectarian religion does not occupy the greater part of the western life and therefore in its heart still remains the possibility of a better human relationship than what prevails now between the races.

We have seen Europe cruelly unscrupulous in its politics and commerce, widely spreading slavery over the face of the earth in various names and forms. And yet, in this very same Europe, protest is always alive against its own iniquities. Martyrs are never absent whose lives of sacrifice are the penance for the wrongs done by their own kindred. The individuality which is western is not to be designated by any sect-name of a particular religion, but is distinguished by its eager attitude towards truth, in two of its aspects, scientific and humanistic. This openness of mind to truth has also its moral value and so in the West it has often been noticed that, while those who are professedly pious have sided with tyrannical power, encouraging repression of freedom, the men of intellect, the sceptics, have bravely stood for justice and the rights of man.

I do not mean to say that those who seek truth always find truth, and we know that men in the West are apt to borrow the sanction of science under false pretences to give expression to their passions and prejudices. To many thinkers there has appeared a clear connection between Darwin's theories and the "imperialism", Teutonic and other, which was so marked a feature during the sixties. We have also read western authors who, admirably mimicking scientific mannerism, assert, as you point out, that only the so-called Nordic race has the proper quality and therefore the right to rule the world, extolling its characteristic ruthlessness as giving it the claim to universal dominance. But we must not forget that such aberrations of science, padded with wrong or imperfect data, will be knocked down by science itself. The stream of water in a river does carry sand, but so long as the stream can still flow it will push away the sand from its own path. If the mental attitude is right we need not be afraid of mistakes. That is why the individual in the West has no unsurpassable barrier between himself and the rest of humanity. He may have his prejudices, but no irrational injunctions to keep him in internment away from the wide world of men.

Unfortunately for us, however, the one outstanding visible relationship of Europe with Asia today is that of exploitation; in other words, its origins are commercial and material. It is physical strength that is most apparent to us in Europe's enormous dominion and commerce, illimitable in its extent and immeasurable in its appetite. Our spirit sickens at it. Everywhere we come against barriers in the way of direct human kinship. The harshness of these external contacts is galling, and therefore the feeling of unrest ever grows more oppressive. There is no people in the whole of Asia today which does not look upon Europe with fear and suspicion.

There was a time when we were fascinated by Europe. She had inspired us with a new hope. We believed that her chief mission was to preach the gospel of liberty to the world. We had come then to know only her ideal side through her literature and art. But slowly, Asia and Africa have become the main spheres of Europe's secular activities, where her chief preoccupations have been the earning of dividends, the administration of empires, and the extension of commerce.

Europe's warehouses and business offices, her police outposts and soldiers' barracks, have been multiplied, while her human relationships have declined.

Towards those who are being exploited, there always is wont to grow up a feeling of contempt. For exploitation itself becomes easier, if we can succeed in creating a callousness towards those who are its victims. Just as whenever we go out fishing we are inclined to regard fishes as the least sensitive of all living creatures, so it becomes quite pleasant to loot the Orient, if only we can make our own moral justification easy by relegating coloured races to the lowest groupings of mankind.

Thus modern Europe, scientific and puissant, has portioned out this wide earth into two divisions. Through her filter, whatever is finest in Europe cannot pass through to reach us in the East. In our traffic with her, we have learnt, as the biggest fact of all, that she is efficient, terribly efficient. We may feel astounded by this efficiency; but if, through fear, we bring to it our homage of respect, then we ourselves need to realize that we are fast going down to the very depths of misfortune; for to do such homage is like the crude barbarity of bringing sacrificial offerings to some god which thirsts for blood. It is on account of this fact, and in order to retain her self-respect, that the whole of Asia today denies the moral superiority of Europe. At the same time, to withstand her ravages, Asia is preparing to imitate the ruthless aspect which slays, which eats raw flesh, which tries to make the swallowing process easier by putting the blame on the victim.

But this, as we realize is only one side, however real and painful, of the Western civilization as it appears to us in the East.

Western humanity, when not affected by its unnatural relationship with the East, preserves a singular strength of moral conduct in the domain of its social life, which has its great inspiration for all of us. It is easy enough for us, when someone reviles us for our social evils, to point at worse evils in Europe;

but this is negative. The bigger thing to remember is, that in Europe these evils are not stagnant. There, the spiritual force in man is ever trying to come to grips. While, for instance, we find in Europe the evil Giant's fortress of Nationalism, we also find Jack the Giant-Killer. For, there is growing up the international mind. This Giant-Killer, the international mind—though small in size—is real. In India, even when we are loudest in our denunciation of Europe, it is often her Giant's fortress that we long to build with awe and worship. We insult Jack with ridicule and suspicion. The chief reason for this is, that in India we have ourselves become material-minded. We are wanting in faith and courage. Since in our country the gods are sleeping, therefore, when the Titans come, they devour all our sacrificial offerings—there is never a hint of strife. The germs of disease are everywhere; but man can resist disease only when his vital force is active and powerful.

So, too, even when the worship of the blood-thirsty and false gods of self-seeking are rampant on all sides, man can lift up his head to the skies if his spirit is awake. Both matter and spirit are active. They alone become entirely materialistic who are only half men, who cripple the native majesty of the spirit before the blind repetition of unintelligent activities; who are niggardly in knowledge and palsied in action; who are ever insulting themselves by setting up a meaningless ritualism in the place of true worship; who have no difficulty whatever in believing that there is special sanctity inherent in particular forms and peculiar rites, even when their significance is neither known nor knowable.

I know how reluctant it makes us feel to give any credit for humanity to the western civilization when we observe the brutalities into which this nationalism of theirs breaks out, instances of which are so numerous all the world over—in the late war, in the lynching of negroes, in cowardly outrages allowed to be committed by European soldiers upon helpless Indians, in the rapacity and vandalism practised in Peking during the Boxer war by the very nations who are never tired of vulgarly applying barbaric epithets to each other according to the vicissitudes of political expediency and passion. But while I have never sought to gloss over or keep out of mind any of these ugly phenomena, I still aver that in the life of the West they have a large tract where their mind is free; whence the circulation of their thought-currents can surround the world. This freedom of the mind's ventilation following the constant growth of a vigorous life bears in it the promise of righting the wrong and purifying the noxious accumulation within.

To me the mere political necessity is unimportant; it is for the sake of our humanity, for the full growth of our soul, that we must turn our mind towards the ideal of the spiritual unity of man. We must use our social strength, not to guard ourselves against the touch of others, considering it as contamination, but generously to extend hospitality to the world, taking all its risks however numerous and grave. We must manfully accept the responsibility of moral freedom, which disdains to barricade itself within dead formulae of external regulation, timidly seeking its security in utter stagnation. Men who live in

dread of the spirit of enquiry and lack courage to launch out in the adventure of truth, can never achieve freedom in any department of life. Freedom is not for those who are not lovers of freedom and who only allow it standing space in the porter's vestibule for the sake of some temporary purpose, while worshipping, in the inner shrine of their life, the spirit of blind obedience.

In India what is needed more than anything else, is the broad mind which, only because it is conscious of its own vigorous individuality, is not afraid of accepting truth from all sources. Fortunately for us we know what such a mind has meant in an individual who belongs to modern India. I speak of Rammohun Roy. His learning, because of its depth and comprehensiveness, did not merely furnish him with materials for scholarship, but trained his mind for the free acceptance of truth. Rammohun Roy developed the courage and capacity to discriminate between things that are essential and those that are non-essential in the culture which was his by inheritance. This helped him to realize that truth can never be foreign, that money and material may exclusively belong to the particular country which produces them, but not knowledge, or ideas, or immortal forms of art.

The very magnitude of mind of such men becomes almost a grievance for smaller personalities, and Rammohun has been misunderstood by his own countrymen because he had in him this modern spirit of freedom and comprehensive grasp of truth. We must, however, never make the mistake of thinking that great men who are belittled by their contemporary compatriots do not represent their countries; for countries are not always true to themselves.

In Rammohun Roy's life we find a concrete illustration of what India seeks, the true indication of her goal. Thoroughly steeped in the best culture of his country, he was capable of finding himself at home in the larger world. His culture was not for rejection of those cultures which came from foreign sources; on the contrary, it had an uncommon power of sympathy which could adjust itself to them with respectful receptiveness.

The ideal I have formed of the culture which should be universal in India, has become clear to me from the life of Rammohun Roy. I have come to feel that the mind which has been matured in the atmosphere of a profound knowledge of its own country, and of the perfect thoughts that have been produced in that land, is ready to accept and assimilate the cultures that come from foreign countries. He who has no wealth of his own can only beg, and those who are compelled to follow the profession of beggary at the gate of the intellectually rich may gain occasional scraps of mental food, but they are sure to lose the strength of their intellectual character and their minds are doomed to become timid in thought and in creative endeavour.

All this time we have been receiving education on purely western lines. When this first began, western culture was imbued with a supreme contempt for that of the East. And to this day, consequently, we have been brought up in this contempt. This speaks of internal dissensions within the temple of Mother Saraswati. Her eastern sons kept closed the door leading to the western side for fear of adulteration, and her western sons barred their eastern

windows through want of respect. Meanwhile the system of education in India remained, and still remains, absurdly un-Indian, making no adequate provision for our own culture. We have, here, not even anything like the facility which the German student enjoys in Germany for the study of the lore of Hindu and Moslem. And if we have become conscious of this vital deficiency in our education, that is because of the spirit of the times.

A certain number of us do not admit that our culture has any special features of value. These good people I leave out of account. But the number of those others is not few, who while admitting this value in theory, ignore it more or less in practice. Very often, the flourishing of the banner of this culture is not for the sake of the love of truth but for that of national vaingloriousness—like brandishing a musical instrument in athletic display before one's own admiring family, instead of using it to make music.

This section of our people while never neglecting to make proud boast of their country's glory, have an absurdly narrow conception of the ideal in which that glory consists. Their indiscriminate reverence is for the actual, not for the eternal. The habits and customs of our decadence which have set up barriers between us and the world, splitting us into mutually exclusive sections, making us weak and bowing our heads in shame at every turn of our later history—these are the idols of their special worship, which they endow with endless virtues of their own imagining. They consider it to be their sacred mission to retain in perpetuity the waste matter sloughed off by age, as the true insignia of our Hindu civilization; to extol the gleam of the will-o-the-wisp, born of the noxious miasma of decay, as more time-hallowed than the light of sun, moon and stars.

In our greed for immediate political result, we are apt to ascribe the fact of our tendency towards separateness to accidental circumstances, refusing to see that a code of behaviour, which has not the sanction of reason, and yet has the support of religion, must result in the creation of irreconciliable divisions between men. In reason alone can we have our common meeting ground; for that which is against reason needs must be peculiar and exclusive, offering constant friction until worn away by the ever-active, rational mind of man. So when, for a body of men, popular custom is artificially protected by a religion which is allowed to usurp the entire range of human knowledge and conduct, it becomes a potent factor in maintaining an immense gap of aloofness and antagonism between closest neighbours.

The evolving Hindu social ideal has never been present to us as a whole, so that we have only a vague conception of what the Hindu has achieved in the past, or can attempt in the future. The partial view, before us at any moment, appears at the time to be the most important, so we can hardly bring ourselves to the true ideal but tend to destroy it. And there we stand fasting and telling beads, emaciated with doing penance, shrinking into a corner away from the rest of the world.

We forget that Hindu civilization was once very much alive, crossing the seas, planting colonies, giving to and taking from all the world. It had its arts,

its commerce, its vast and strenuous field of work. In its history, new ideas had their opportunity. Its women also, had their learning, their bravery, their place in the civic life. In every page of the Mahabharata we shall find proofs that it was no rigid, cast-iron type of civilization. The men of those days did not, like marionettes, play the same set piece over and over again. They progressed through mistakes, made discoveries through experiment, and gained truth through striving. They belonged to a free and varied *Samaj*, quick with life, driven into ever new enterprise by its active vigour.

This, however, was society which orthodoxy today would hardly recognize as Hindu, because it was living and had a growth which was revealing its inner unity through outer changes. So the *dharma* (principle) of life which thinks and doubts, accepts and rejects, progresses, changes and evolves, cannot, according to orthodoxy, be a part of the Hindu Dharma. Man shows his mental feebleness when he loses his faith in life because it is difficult to govern, and is only willing to take the responsibility of the dead because they are content to lie still under an elaborately decorated tomb-stone of his own make. We must know that life carries its own weight, while the burden of the dead is heavy to bear—an intolerable burden which has been pressing upon our country for ages.

The fact stands out clearly today that the Divinity dwelling within the heart of man cannot be kept immured any longer in the darkness of particular temples. The day of the *Ratha-yatra*, the Car Festival, has arrived when He shall come out on the high way of the world, into the thick of the joys and sorrows, the mutual commerce, of the throng of men. Each of us must set to work to build such car as we can, to take its place in the grand procession. The material of some may be of value, of others cheap. Some may break down on the way, others last till the end. But the day has come at last when all the cars must set out.

III

YOUR LETTER HAS been a confirmation to me of the deep faith in the ultimate truths of humanity which we both try to serve and which sustains our being. I have tried to express how religion today as it exists in its prevalent institutionalised forms both in the West and the East has failed in its function to control and guide the forces of humanity; how the growth of nationalism and wide commerce of ideas through speeded-up communication have often augmented external differences instead of bringing humanity together. Development of organizing power, mastery over Nature's resources have subserved secret passions or the openly flaunted greed of unashamed national glorification. And yet I do not feel despondent about the future. For the great fact remains that man has never stopped in his urge for self-expression, in his brave quest of knowledge; not only so, there is today all over the world in spite of selfishness and unreason a greater *awareness* of truth. The fury of despotic tyranny, the denial of civic sanity and the violence with which the citadels of

international federation are constantly assaulted, combine to betray an uncomfortable and increased consciousness in the mind of man of the inescapable responsibilities of humanity. It is this stirring of the human conscience to which we must look for a reassertion of man in religion, in political and economic affairs, in the spheres of education and social intercourse. It is apparent that innumerable individuals in every land are rising up vitalized by this faith, men and women who have suffered and sought the meaning of life and who are ready to stake their all for raising a new structure of human civilization on the foundation of international understanding and fellowship. In this fact lies the great hope of humanity—this emergence in every nation, in spite of repression and the suicidal fever of national war-mindedness, of the clean and radiant fires of individual consciousness. When I read some of the outstanding modern books published after the War I realize how the brighter spirits of young Europe are now alive to the challenge of our times. Nothing can be of greater joy to us in India than to find how unimpeachably great some of your scholars, historians, artists and literary men are in their fearless advocacy of truth, their passion for righteousness. In India, too, there is a great awakening everywhere, mainly under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi's singular purity of will and conduct, which is creating a new generation of clear-minded servers of our peoples. To these individuals of every land and race, these youthful spirits burning like clean flame on the altar of humanity, I offer my obeisance from the sunset-crested end of my road.

I feel proud that I have been born in this great Age. I know that it must take time before we can adjust our minds to a condition which is not only new, but almost exactly the opposite of the old. Let us announce to the world that the light of the morning has come, not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers, but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation; never for nourishing a spirit of rejection, but for that glad acceptance which constantly carries in itself the giving out of the best that we have.

Yours sincerely,
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

II

Lectures and Addresses

RACE CONFLICT

THE PROBLEM OF race conflict has ever been present in the history of mankind. This conflict has been at the basis of all great civilizations. It is like the clash of elements in the material world giving rise to complex combinations and evolutions of higher growth.

It was the concussion of peoples brought up in different surroundings and with different outlook upon life that started the original energy resulting in complicated social organizations. All civilizations are mixed products. Only barbarism is simple, monadic and unalloyed.

When differences have to be taken into account perforce, when there is no possible escape from them, then men are compelled to find out some central bond which can bring into unity all the diverse elements. This is really the seeking after truth, the search for the one in the many, the universal through the individuals.

Naturally, in the commencement its appearance is simple and crude. Some common visible object of worship is held as a symbol of the oneness of the people. It is very often gross and frightful. For when man has to depend upon external standards of life these have to be made as conspicuous as possible, and nothing is so compelling to primitive imagination as fear.

But, as the community grows larger and, by conquest and other means, peoples of different traditions unite, then fetishes multiply and more gods than one have to be recognized. In that case, these symbols lose their power as common bonds, and they have to be replaced by something whose appeal is not so much to the senses and whose significance is more universal.

Thus, gradually, as the problem grows more and more wide and complex, the solution of it becomes deeper and more far-reaching, and human solidarity seeks for its foundation something which is abiding and comprehensive. This is the purpose of all history, man seeking truth through complexities of experience impelled by the impetus of the immensity of evergrowing life.

There was a time when owing to the restricted means of communication different races and nations lived in a state of comparative segregation and consequently their social laws and institutions had an intensely local character. They were narrowly racial and aggressively hostile to the aliens. People did not have frequent occasion to learn how to adjust themselves with outsiders. They had to take to violent measures when they collided with alien people. They simplified the problem to its narrowest limits and either absolutely excluded and exterminated all foreign elements or completely amalgamated them.

Men have not yet outgrown this training of racial or national self-sufficiency. They are still burdened with the age-long inheritance of a suspicion of aliens which is the primitive instinct of animals. They still have a lurking ferocity ready to come out at the slightest provocation when in contact with people outside their social boundaries. They have not yet acquired

fairness of mind when judging other races and dealing with them. They have not that power of adjusting their mental vision which would enable them to understand the people who are not nearest to them. They strive their utmost to prove the superiority and originality of their own religion and philosophy and they are reluctant to acknowledge that, truth, because it is truth, naturally manifests itself in different countries in different garbs. They are ever prone to put more stress on differences which are external and lose sight of the inner harmony.

This is the result of being brought up in the home training of isolation, which makes one unfit for the citizenship of the world. But this cannot continue for long and with the advent of the new age of science and commerce men have been brought nearer to each other than they ever were before and they are face to face with the highest problem of human history, the problem of race conflict.

This problem has been waiting to be solved by experience, through the expansion of history. It is not a mere matter of sentiment or of intellect. We had prophets who preached equality of man, and philosophy and literature which gave us a broader view of reality than is contained in the limits of racial traditions and habits. But this race problem with its vast complexity was never before us—we were not in living contact with it. Humanity, till now, has played with this sentiment of brotherhood of man as a girl does with her doll. It reveals the truth of the feeling which is innate in the heart of man, still it lacks the reality of life. But the playtime is passed and what was only in the sentiment has grown into our life fraught with immense responsibilities.

Of all the ancient civilizations, I think, that of India was compelled to recognize this race problem in all seriousness and for ages she has been engaged unravelling the most bafflingly complicated tangle of race-differences. Europe was fortunate in having neighbouring races more or less homogeneous, for, most of them were of the same origin. So, though in Europe there were bitter feuds between different peoples, there was not that physical antipathy between them which the difference in colour of skin and in feature tends to produce. In England it did not take long for the Norman and Saxon elements to coalesce and lose their distinctions. Not only in colour and features but in their ideals of life the western peoples are so near each other that practically they are acting as one in building up their civilization.

But it has been otherwise with India. At the beginning of Indian history the white-skinned Aryans had encounters with the aboriginal people who were dark and who were intellectually inferior to them. Then there were the Dravidians who had their own civilization and whose gods and modes of worship and social system were totally different from those of the newcomers, which must have proved a more active barrier between them than fullfledged barbarism.

In tropical countries life is not so strenuous as it is where the climate is cold. There the necessities of life are comparatively small and nature more prodigal in her bounties; therefore in those countries strifes between con-

tending parties die away for want of incentives. So, in India, after a period of fierce struggles, men of different colours and creeds, different physical features and mental attitudes settled together side by side. As men are not inert matter but living beings, this juxtaposition of different elements became an everpresent problem for India. But with all its disadvantages this it was that stimulated men's minds to find out the essential unity in diversity of forms, to know that, however different be the symbols and rituals, God, whom they try to represent, is one without a second, and to realize him truly is to realize him in the soul of all beings.

When differences are too jarring, man cannot accept them as final; so, either he wipes them out with blood, or coerces them in some kind of superficial homogeneity, or he finds out a deeper unity which he knows is the highest truth.

India chose the last alternative; and all through the political vicissitudes that tossed her about for centuries, when her sister civilizations of Greece and Rome exhausted their life force, her spiritual vitality still continued and she still retains her dignity of soul. I do not say for a moment that the difficulties about the race differences have been altogether removed in India. On the contrary, new elements have been added, new complications introduced, and all the great religions of the world have taken their roots in the soil of India. In her attempts at bringing into order this immense mass of heterogeneity India has passed through successive periods of expansion and contraction of her ideals. And her latest has been that of setting up rigid lines of regulations to keep different sections at arm's length to prevent confusion and clash.

But such a negative attitude cannot last long, and mere mechanical contrivances can never work satisfactorily in human society. If, by any chance, men are brought together who are not products of the same history and not moulded in the same traditions, they never can rest till they can find out some broad basis of union which is positive in its nature and which makes for love. And I am sure, in India we have that spiritual ideal, if dormant but still living, which can tolerate all differences in the exterior while recognizing the inner unity. I feel sure, in India, we have that golden key forged by ancient wisdom and love which will one day open the barred gates to bring together to the feast of good fellowship men who have lived separated for generations.

From a very remote period of her history till now all the great personalities of India have been working in the same direction. The Gospel of universal love that Buddha preached was the outcome of a movement long preceding him, which endeavoured to get at the kernel of spiritual unity, breaking through all divergence of symbols and ceremonies and individual preferences.

With the advent of the Mohamedan power not only a new political situations was created in India but new ideas in religion and social customs were brought before the people with a violent force. Nevertheless, it had not the effect of generating an antagonistic fanatical movement among Hindus. On the contrary, all the great religious geniuses that were born during this

period in India sought a reconciliation of the old with the new ideals in a deeper synthesis, which was possible because of the inherited spirit of toleration and accumulated wisdom of ages. In all these movements there was the repeated call to the people to forget all distinctions of castes and creeds and accept the highest privilege of brotherhood of man by uniting in love of God.

The same thing has occurred again when India has been closely brought in contact with the Christian civilization with the coming of the English. The Brahmo Samaj movement in India is the movement for the spiritual reconciliation of the East and West, the reconciliation resting upon the broad basis of spiritual wisdom laid in the Upanishads. There is again the same call to the people to rise above all artificial barriers of caste and recognise the common bond of brotherhood in the name of God.

In no other country in the world is the conflux of races different in every respect so great as in India. Therefore it never could have been possible for her to come to such a simple solution of the difficulty as national unity. The fetish of nationalism is powerless to bring her warring elements into a harmony; she must appeal to the highest power in man, the spiritual power, she must come to her God. There has been going on in India a long continued contention between rigid forms of exclusiveness which is mechanical and a recognition of the unity of mankind which is spiritual. Here, as in every land, the social convention is on the side of the pride of caste, and the higher nature and the deeper wisdom of the people assert in the lives of its greatest personalities the validity of the claims of all men to justice and love. On the one hand there is the regulation which forbids eating and drinking at the same board for men of different castes and on the other hand there comes the voice from the ancient past which preaches that he who realizes his own self in the self of all individuals realizes truly. And I have not the least doubt in my mind that it is the urging of this spiritual impulse in man which will win in the end, and will mould all the social forms in such a way that they may not hinder its purpose but become its instrument.

I bring before you this instance of Indian history to show that a problem must be a living one to rouse man's mind for its solution. It has become so in the present age. Races widely separated in their geographical position and historical growth, in their modes of thought and manners of expression have been brought near each other in closer relations. To each man the human world has been enlarged to an extent never dreamt of in former days. That we are not ready for these changed circumstances is becoming painfully evident every day. The caste feeling is running fearfully high. The western people are cultivating an arrogant exclusiveness against all other races. While keeping for themselves their prerogatives of exploiting weaker nations by threat of force they securely bar their own gates against them in a manner cruelly barbarous and inhospitable. Sentiments of humanity are openly discredited and poets of world-wide reputation are exulting in the triumph of brute force. Nations wakened from a lethargy of centuries and bravely struggling for a larger life

are held back by others more fortunate, waiting to turn to their own advantage the situation created by the breaking up of old order. Want of consideration for people held to be inferior to themselves, rising into inhuman atrocities where privacy is secured, is not uncommon with the people proud of their colour and the impunity of their position.

Yet, in spite of these untoward aspects of the case I assert strongly that the solution is most assured when difficulties are greatest. It is a matter for congratulation that today the civilized man is seriously confronted with this problem of race conflict. And the greatest thing that this age can be proud of is the birth of Man in the consciousness of men. Its bed has not been provided for, it is born in poverty, its infancy is lying neglected in a wayside stall, spurned by wealth and power. But its day of triumph is approaching. It is waiting for its poets and prophets and host of humble workers and they will not tarry for long. When the call of humanity is poignantly insistent then the higher nature of man cannot but respond. In the darkest periods of his drunken orgies of power and national pride man may flout and jeer at it, daub it as an expression of weakness and sentimentalism, but in that very paroxysm of arrogance, when his attitude is most hostile and his attacks most reckless against it, he is suddenly reminded that it is the direst form of suicide to kill the highest truth that is in him. When organized national selfishness, racial antipathy and commercial selfseeking begin to display their ugly deformities in all their nakedness, then comes the time for man to know that his salvation is not in political organizations and extended trade relations, not in any mechanical rearrangement of social system, but in a deeper transformation of life, in the liberation of consciousness in love, in the realization of God in man.

1912

THE SPIRIT OF JAPAN

ONE MORNING THE whole world looked up in surprise, when Japan broke through her walls of old habits in a night and came out triumphant. It was done in such an incredibly short time, that it seemed like a change of dress and not like the slow building up of a new structure. She showed the confident strength of maturity and the freshness and infinite potentiality of new life at the same moment. The fear was entertained that it was a mere freak of history, a child's game of Time, the blowing up of a soap bubble, perfect in its rondure and colouring, hollow in its heart and without substance. But Japan has proved conclusively that this sudden revealment of her power is not a shortlived wonder, a chance product of time and tide, thrown up from the depth of obscurity to be swept away the next moment into the sea of oblivion.

The truth is that Japan is old and new at the same time. She has her legacy of ancient culture from the East,—the culture that enjoins man to look for his true wealth and power in his inner soul, the culture that gives self-possession in the face of loss and danger, self-sacrifice without counting the cost or hoping for gain, defiance of death, acceptance of countless social obligations that we owe to man as a social being,—the culture that has given us the vision of the infinite in all finite things, through which we have come to realize that the universe is living with a life and permeated with a soul, that it is not a huge machine which had been turned out by a demon of accidence or fashioned by a teleological God who lives in a far away heaven. In a word modern Japan has come out of the immemorial East like a lotus blossoming in an easy grace, all the while keeping its firm hold upon the profound depth from which it has sprung.

And Japan, the child of the Ancient East, has also fearlessly claimed all the gifts of the modern age for herself. She has shewn her bold spirit in breaking through the confinements of habits, useless accumulations of the lazy mind, seeking safety in its thrift and its lock and keys. Thus she has come in contact with the living time and has accepted with an amazing eagerness and aptitude the responsibilities of modern civilization.

This it is which has given heart to the rest of Asia. We have seen that the life and the strength are there in us, only the dead crust has to be removed; that we must nakedly take our plunge into the youth-giving stream of the time-flood. We have seen that taking shelter in the dead is death itself, and only taking all the risk of life to the fullest extent is living.

Japan has taught us that we must learn the watchword of the age, in which we live, and answer has to be given to the sentinel of time, if we must escape annihilation. Japan has sent forth her word over Asia, that the old seed has the life germ in it, only it has to be planted in the soil of the new age.

I, for myself, cannot believe that Japan has become what she is by imitating the West. We cannot imitate life, we cannot simulate strength for long, nay, what is more, a mere imitation is a source of weakness. For it

hampers our true nature, it is always in our way. It is like dressing our skeleton with another man's skin, giving rise to eternal feuds between the skin and the bones at every movement.

I have not had the opportunity of coming into intimate touch with Japan and forming my own opinion of what she truly is, where is her strength and where lie her dangers. For a person like myself belonging to the East, her present problems and her methods of solution of those problems are matters of utmost interest. The whole world waits to see what this great Eastern nation is going to do with the opportunities and responsibilities she has accepted from the hands of the modern time. If it be a mere reproduction of the West, then the great expectation she has raised will remain unfulfilled. For there are grave questions that the Western civilization has presented before the world but not completely answered. The conflict between the individual and the state, labour and capital, the man and the woman; the conflict between the greed of material gain and the spiritual life of man, the organized selfishness of nations and the higher ideals of humanity; the conflict between all the ugly complexities inseparable from giant organizations of commerce and state and the natural instincts of man crying for simplicity and beauty and fullness of leisure,—all these have to be brought to a harmony in a manner not yet dreamt of.

We have seen this great stream of civilization choking itself from debris carried by its innumerable channels. We have seen that with all its vaunted love of humanity it has proved itself the greatest menace to Man, far worse than the sudden outbursts of nomadic barbarism from which men suffered in the early ages of history. We have seen that, in spite of its boasted love of freedom, it has produced worse forms of slavery than ever were current in earlier societies,—slavery whose chains are unbreakable, either because they are unseen, or because they assume the names and appearance of freedom. We have seen, under the spell of its gigantic sordidness, man losing faith in all the heroic ideals of life which have made him great.

Therefore you cannot with a light heart accept the modern civilization with all its tendencies, methods and structures, and dream that they are inevitable. You must apply your Eastern mind, your spiritual strength, your love of simplicity, your recognition of social obligation, in order to cut out a new path for this great unwieldy car of progress, shrieking out its loud discords as it runs. You must minimize the immense sacrifice of man's life and freedom that it claims in its every movement. For generations you have felt and thought and worked, have enjoyed and worshipped in your own special manner; and this cannot be cast off like old clothes. It is in your blood, in the marrow of your bones, in the texture of your flesh, in the tissue of your brains; and it must modify everything you lay your hands upon, without your knowing, even against your wishes. Once you did solve the problems of man to your own satisfaction, you had your philosophy of life and evolved your own art of living. All this you must apply to the present situation and out of it will arise a new creation and not a mere repetition, a creation which the soul of your people

will own for itself and proudly offer to the world as its tribute to the welfare o man. Of all countries in Asia, here in Japan you have the freedom to use th materials you have gathered from the West according to your genius and you need. You are fortunately not hampered from the outside, therefore you responsibility is all the greater, for in your voice Asia shall answer the question that Europe has submitted to the conference of Man. In your land th experiments will be carried on by which the East will change the aspects of th modern civilization, infusing life in it where it is a machine, substitutin human heart for cold expediency, not caring so much for power and succes as for harmonious and living growth, for truth and beauty.

I cannot but bring to your mind those days when the whole of Easten Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India in the closest tie of friendship the only natural tie which can exist between nations. There was a livin communication of hearts, a nervous system evolved through which message ran between us about the deepest needs of humanity. We did not stand in fea of each other, we had not to arm ourselves to keep each other in check; ou relation was not that of self-interest, of exploration and spoliation of eacl other's pockets; ideas and ideals were exchanged, gifts of the highest love wer offered and taken; no difference of languages and customs hindered us ir approaching each other heart to heart; no pride of race or insolent con sciousness of superiority, physical or mental, marred our relation; our arts an literatures put forth new leaves and flowers under the influence of thi sunlight of united hearts; and races belonging to different lands and lan guages and histories acknowledged the highest unity of man and the deepes bond of love. May we not also remember that in those days of peace an goodwill, of men uniting for those supreme ends of life, your nature laid b for itself the balm of immortality which has helped your people to be borr again in a new age, to be able to survive its old outworn structures and take or a new young body, to come out unscathed from the shock of the mos wonderful revolution that the world has ever seen? I cannot help thinking tha it is only the divine in man that can perform this miracle of transmuting th old into the new, the weak into the strong, the insult into a glorious victory And that divine in you was born, not in these sordid days of screechin machinery and gigantic selfishness, not amidst the blatant lies of statecraft an the smug self-satisfaction of prosperous hypocrisy, but in the dawn-light of tha heroic manhood when heaven came nearer the earth, and man had faith ir his own soul and the soul whose revelation is the world.

What has impressed me most in this country is the conviction that yot have realized nature's secrets, not by methods of analytical knowledge, but b sympathy. You have known her language of lines and music of colours, th symmetry in her irregularities, and the cadence in her freedom of movements you have seen how she leads her immense crowds of things yet avoids al frictions; how the very conflicts in her creations break out in dance and music how her exuberance has the aspect of the fullness of self-abandonment, an not a mere dissipation of display. You have discovered that nature reserves he

power in forms of beauty; and it is this beauty which, like a mother, nourishes all the giant forces at her breast, keeping them in active vigour, yet in repose. You have known that energies of nature save themselves from wearing out by the rhythm of a perfect grace, and that she with the tenderness of her curved lines takes away fatigue from the world's muscles. I have felt that you have been able to assimilate these secrets into your life, and the truth which lies in the beauty of all things has passed into your souls. A mere knowledge of things can be had in a short enough time, but their spirit can only be acquired by centuries of training and self-control. Dominating nature from outside is a much simpler thing than making her your own in love's delight, which is a work of true genius. Your race has shown that genius, not by acquirements, but by creation; not by display of things, but by manifestation of its own inner being. This creative power there is in all nations, and it is ever active in getting hold of men's natures and giving them a form according to its ideals. But here, in Japan, it seems to have achieved its success, and deeply sunk into the minds of all men, and permeated their muscles and nerves. Your instincts have become true, your senses keen, and your hands have acquired natural skill. The genius of Europe has given her people the power of organization, which has specially made itself manifest in politics and commerce and in coordinating scientific knowledge. The genius of Japan has given you the vision of beauty in nature and the power of realizing it in your life. And, because of this fact, the power of organization has come so easily to your help when you needed it. For the rhythm of beauty is the inner spirit, whose outer body is organization.

All particular civilization is the interpretation of particular human experience. Europe seems to have felt emphatically the conflict of things in the universe, which can only be brought under control by conquest. Therefore she is ever ready for fight, and the best portion of her attention is occupied in organizing forces. But Japan has felt, in her world, the touch of some presence, which has evoked in her soul a feeling of reverent adoration. She does not boast of her mastery of nature, but to her she brings, with infinite care and joy, her offerings of love. Her relationship with the world is the deeper relationship of heart. This spiritual bond of love she has established with the hills of her country, with the sea and the streams, with the forests in all their flowery moods and varied physiognomy of branches; she has taken into her heart and the rustling whispers and sighing of the woodlands and sobbing of the waves; the sun and the moon she has studied in all the modulations of their lights and shades, and she is glad to close her shops to greet the seasons in her orchards and gardens and cornfields. This opening of the heart to the soul of the world is not confined to a section of your privileged classes, it is not the forced product of exotic culture, but it belongs to all your men and women of all conditions. This experience of your soul, in meeting a personality in the heart of the world, has been embodied in your civilization. It is civilization of human relationship. Your duty towards your state has naturally assumed the character of filial duty, your nation becoming one family with your Emperor

as its head. Your national unity has not been evolved from the comradeship of arms for defensive and offensive purposes, or from partnership in raiding adventures, dividing among each member the danger and spoils of robbery. It is not an outcome of the necessity of organization for some ulterior purpose, but it is an extension of the family and the obligations of the heart in a wide field of space and time.

And this has made me all the more apprehensive of the change, which threatens Japanese civilization, as something like a menace to one's own person. For the huge heterogeneity of the modern age, whose only common bond is usefulness, is nowhere so pitifully exposed against the dignity and hidden power of reticent beauty, as in Japan.

But the danger lies in this, that organized ugliness storm the mind and carries the day by its mass, by its aggressive persistence, by its power of mockery directed against the deeper sentiments of heart. Its harsh obtrusiveness makes it forcibly visible to us, overcoming our senses,—and we bring to its altar sacrifices as does a savage to the fetish which appears powerful because of its hideousness. Therefore its rivalry to things that are modest and profound and have the subtle delicacy of life is to be dreaded.

I am quite sure that there are men in your nation, who are not in sympathy with your national ideals; whose object is to gain, and not to grow. They are loud in their boast, that they have modernized Japan. While I agree with them so far as to say, that the spirit of the race should harmonize with the spirit of the time, I must warn them that modernizing is a mere affectation of modernism, just as affectation of poesy is poetising. It is nothing but mimicry,—only affectation is louder than the original, and it is too literal. One must bear in mind, that those who have the true modern spirit need not modernise, just as those who are truly brave are not braggarts. Modernism is not in the dress of the Europeans; or in the hideous structures, where their children are interned when they take their lessons; or in the square houses with flat straight wall-surfaces, pierced with parallel lines of windows, where these people are caged in their lifetime; certainly modernism is not in their ladies' bonnets, carrying on them loads of incongruities." These are not modern, but merely European. True modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters. It is science, but not its wrong application in life,—a mere imitation of our science teachers who reduce it into a superstition absurdly invoking its aid for all impossible purposes.

I do not for a moment suggest, that Japan should be unmindful of acquiring modern weapons of self-protection. But this should never be allowed to go beyond her instinct of self-preservation. She must know that the real power is not in the weapons themselves, but in the man who wields those weapons; and when he, in his eagerness for power, multiplies his weapons at the cost of his own soul, then it is he who is in even greater danger than his enemies.

Things that are living are so easily hurt; therefore they require protection. In nature, life protects itself within coverings, which are built with life's

own material. Therefore they are in harmony with life's growth, or else when the time comes they easily give way and are forgotten. The living man has his true protection in his spiritual ideals, which have their vital connection with his life and grow with his growth. But, unfortunately, all his armour is not living,—some of it is made of steel, inert and mechanical. Therefore, while making use of it, man has to be careful to protect himself from its tyranny. If he is weak enough to grow smaller to fit himself to his covering, then it becomes a process of gradual suicide by shrinkage of the soul. And Japan must have a firm faith in the moral law of existence to be able to assert to herself, that the Western nations are following that path of suicide, where they are smothering their humanity under the immense weight of organizations in order to keep themselves in power and hold others in subjection.

Therefore I cannot think that the imitation of the outward aspects of the West, which is becoming more and more evident in modern Japan, is essential to her strength or stability. It is burdening her true nature and causing weakness, which will be felt more deeply as time goes on. The habits, which are being formed by the modern Japanese from their boyhood,—the habits of the Western life, the habits of the alien culture,—will prove, one day, a serious obstacle to the understanding of their own true nature. And then, if the children of Japan forget their past, if they stand as barriers, choking the stream that flows from the mountain peak of their ancient history, their future will be deprived of the water of life that has made her culture so fertile with richness of beauty and strength.

What is still more dangerous for Japan is not this imitation of the outer features of the West, but the acceptance of the motive force of the Western civilization as her own. Her social ideals are already showing signs of defeat at the hands of politics, and her modern tendency seems to incline towards political gambling in which the players stake their souls to win their game. I can see her motto, taken from science, "Survival of the Fittest," writ large at the entrance of her present-day history—the motto whose meaning is, "Help yourself, and never heed what it costs to others"; the motto of the blind man, who only believes in what he can touch, because he cannot see. But those who can see, know that men are so closely knit, that when you strike others the blow comes back to yourself. The moral law, which is the greatest discovery of man, is the discovery of this wonderful truth, that man becomes all the truer, the more he realizes himself in others. This truth has not only a subjective value, but is manifested in every department of our life. And nations, who sedulously cultivate moral blindness as the cult of patriotism, will end their existence in a sudden and violent manner. In past ages we had foreign invasions, there had been cruelty and bloodshed, intrigues of jealousy and avarice, but they never touched the soul of the people deeply; for the people, as a body, never participated in these games. They were merely the outcome of individual ambitions. The people themselves, being free from the responsibilities of the baser and more heinous side of those adventures, had all the advantage of the heroic and the human disciplines derived from them. This developed their

unflinching loyalty, their single-minded devotion to the obligations of honour, their power of complete self-surrender and fearless acceptance of death and danger. Therefore the ideals, whose seats were in the hearts of the people, would not undergo any serious change owing to the policies adopted by the kings or generals. But now, where the spirit of the Western civilization prevails, the whole people is being taught from boyhood, to foster hatreds and ambitions by all kinds of means,—by the manufacture of half-truths and untruths in history, by persistent misrepresentation of other races and the culture of unfavourable sentiments towards them, by setting up memorials of events, very often false, which for the sake of humanity should be speedily forgotten, thus continually brewing evil menace towards neighbours and nations other than their own. This is poisoning the very fountain-head of humanity. It is discrediting the ideals, which were born of the lives of men, who were our greatest and best. It is holding up gigantic selfishness as the one universal religion for all nations of the world. We can take anything else from the hands of science, but not this elixir of moral death. Never think for a moment, that the hurts you inflict upon other races will not infect you, and the enmities you sow around your homes will be a wall of protection to you for all time to come. To imbue the minds of a whole people with an abnormal vanity of its own superiority, to teach it to take pride in its moral callousness and ill-begotten wealth, to perpetuate humiliation of defeated nations by exhibiting trophies won from war, and using these in schools in order to breed in children's minds contempt for others, is imitating the West where she has a festering sore, whose swelling is a swelling of disease eating into its vitality.

Our food crops, which are necessary for our sustenance, are products of centuries of selection and care. But the vegetation, which we have not to transform into our lives, does not require the patient thoughts of generations. It is not easy to get rid of weeds; but it is easy, by process of neglect, to ruin your food crops and let them revert to their primitive state of wildness. Likewise the culture, which has so kindly adapted itself to your soil,—so intimate with life, so human,—not only needed tilling and weeding in past ages, but still needs anxious work and watching. What is merely modern,—as science and methods of organization,—can be transplanted; but what is vitally human has fibres so delicate, and roots so numerous and far reaching, that it dies when moved from its soil. Therefore I am afraid of the rude pressure of the political ideals of the West upon your own. In political civilization, the state is an abstraction and relationship of men utilitarian. Because it has no roots in sentiments, it is so dangerously easy to handle. Half a century has been enough for you to master this machine; and there are men among you, whose fondness for it exceeds their love for the living ideals which were born with the birth of your nation and nursed in your centuries. It is like a child, who, in the excitement of his play, imagines he likes his playthings better than his mother.

Where man is at his greatest, he is unconscious. Your civilization, whose mainspring is the bond of human relationship, has been nourished in the depth of a healthy life beyond reach of prying self-analysis. But a mere political

relationship is all conscious; it is an eruptive inflammation of aggressiveness. It has forcibly burst upon your notice. And the time has come, when you have to be roused into full consciousness of the truth by which you live, so that you may not be taken unawares. The past has been God's gift to you; about the present, you must make your own choice.

So the questions you have to put to yourselves are these,—"Have we read the world wrong, and based our relation to it upon an ignorance of human nature? Is the instinct of the West right, where she builds her national welfare behind the barricade of a universal distrust of humanity?"

You must have detected a strong accent of fear, whenever the West has discussed the possibility of the rise of an Eastern race. The reason of it is this, that the power, by whose help she thrives, is an evil power; so long as it is held on her own side she can be safe, while the rest of the world trembles. The vital ambition of the present civilization of Europe is to have the exclusive possession of the devil. All her armaments and diplomacy are directed upon this one object. But these costly rituals for invocation of the evil spirit lead through a path of prosperity to the brink of cataclysm. The furies of terror, which the West has let loose upon God's world, come back to threaten herself and goad her into preparations of more and more frightfulness; this gives her no rest and makes her forget all else but the perils that she causes to others and incurs herself. To the worship of this devil of politics she sacrifices other countries as victims. She feeds upon their dead flesh and grows fat upon it, so long as the carcasses remain fresh,—but they are sure to rot at last, and the dead will take their revenge, by spreading pollution far and wide and poisoning the vitality of the feeder. Japan had all her wealth of humanity, her harmony of heroism and beauty, her depth of self-control and richness of self-expression; yet the Western nations felt no respect for her, till she proved that the bloodhounds of Satan are not only bred in the kennels of Europe, but can also be domesticated in Japan and fed with man's miseries. They admit Japan's equality with themselves, only when they know that Japan also possesses the key to open the floodgate of hell-fire upon the fair earth, whenever she chooses, and can dance, in their own measure, the devil dance of pillage, murder, and ravishment of innocent women, while the world goes to ruin. We know that, in the early stage of man's moral immaturity, he only feels reverence for the god whose malevolence he dreads. But is this the ideal of man which we can look up to with pride? After centuries of civilization nations fearing each other like the prowling wild beasts of the night time; shutting their doors of hospitality; combining only for purpose of aggression or defence; hiding in their holes their trade secrets, state secrets, secrets of their armaments; making peace offerings to the barking dogs of each other with the meat which does not belong to them; holding down fallen races struggling to stand upon their feet; counting their safety only upon the feebleness of the rest of humanity; with their right hands dispensing religion to weaker peoples, while robbing them with their left,—is there anything in this to make us envious? Are we to bend our knees to the spirit of this civilization, which is

sowing broadcast over all the world seeds of fear, greed, suspicion, unashamed lies of its diplomacy, and unctuous lies of its profession of peace and good-will and universal brotherhood of Man? Can we have no doubt in our minds, when we rush to the Western market to buy this foreign product in exchange for our own inheritance? I am aware how difficult it is to know one's self; and the man, who is intoxicated, furiously denies his drunkenness; yet the West herself is anxiously thinking of her problems and trying experiments. But she is like a glutton, who has not the heart to give up his intemperance in eating, and fondly clings to the hope that he can cure his nightmares of indigestion by medicine. Europe is not ready to give up her political inhumanity, with all the baser passions of man attendant upon it; she believes only in modification of systems, and not in change of heart.

We are willing to buy their machine-made systems, not with our heart, but with our brains. We shall try them and build sheds for them, but not enshrine them in our homes, or temples. There are races, who worship the animals they kill; we can buy meat from them, when we are hungry, but not the worship which goes with the killing. We must not vitiate our children's minds with the superstition, that business is business, war is war, politics is politics. We must know that man's business has to be more than mere business, and so have to be his war and politics. You had your own industry in Japan; how scrupulously honest and true it was, you can see by its products,—by their grace and strength, their conscientiousness in details, where they can hardly be observed. But the tidal wave of falsehood has swept over your land from that part of the world, where business is business, and honesty is followed in it merely as the best policy. Have you never felt shame, when you see the trade advertisements, not only plastering the whole town with lies and exaggerations, but invading the green fields, where the peasants do their honest labour, and the hill-tops, which greet the first pure light of the morning? It is so easy to dull our sense of honour and delicacy of mind with constant abrasion, while falsehoods stalk abroad with proud steps in the name of trade, politics and patriotism, that any protest against their perpetual intrusion into our lives is considered to be sentimentalism, unworthy of true manliness.

And it has come to pass, that the children of those heroes, who would keep their word at the point of death, who would disdain to cheat men for vulgar profit, who even in their fight would much rather court defeat than be dishonourable, have become energetic in dealing with falsehoods and do not feel humiliated by gaining advantage from them. And this has been effected by the charm of the word 'modern.' But if undiluted utility be modern, beauty is of all ages; if mean selfishness be modern, the human ideals are no new inventions. And we must know for certain, that however modern may be the proficiency, which clips and cripples man for the sake of methods and machines, it will never live to be old.

But while trying to free our minds from the arrogant claims of Europe and to help ourselves out of the quicksands of our infatuation, we may go to the other extreme and blind ourselves with a wholesale suspicion of the West.

The reaction of disillusionment is just as unreal as the first shock of illusion. We must try to come to that normal state of mind, by which we can clearly discern our own danger and avoid it, without being unjust towards the source of that danger. There is always the natural temptation in us of wishing to pay back Europe in her own coin, and return contempt for contempt and evil for evil. But that again would be to imitate Europe in one of her worst features which comes out in her behaviour to people whom she describes as yellow or red, brown or black. And this is a point on which we in the East have to acknowledge our guilt and own that our sin has been as great, if not greater, when we insulted humanity by treating with utter disdain and cruelty men who belonged to a particular creed, colour or caste. It is really because we are afraid of our own weakness, which allows itself to be overcome by the sight of power, that we try to substitute for it another weakness which makes itself blind to the glories of the West. When we truly know the Europe which is great and good, we can effectively save ourselves from the Europe which is mean and grasping. It is easy to be unfair in one's judgment when one is faced with human miseries,—and pessimism is the result of building theories while the mind is suffering. To despair of humanity is only possible, if we lose faith in the power which brings to it strength, when its defeat is greatest, and calls out new life from the depth of its destruction. We must admit that there is a living soul in the West which is struggling unobserved against the hugeness of the organizations under which men, women and children are being crushed, and whose mechanical necessities are ignoring laws that are spiritual and human,—the soul whose sensibilities refuse to be dulled completely by dangerous habits of heedlessness in dealings with races for whom it lacks natural sympathy. The West could never have risen to the eminence she has reached, if her strength were merely the strength of the brute, or of the machine. The divine in her heart is suffering from the injuries inflicted by her hands upon the world,—and from this pain of her higher nature flows the secret balm which will bring healing to those injuries. Time after time she has fought against herself and has undone the chains, which with her own hands she had fastened round helpless limbs; and though she forced poison down the throat of a great nation at the point of the sword for gain of money, she herself woke up to withdraw from it, to wash her hands clean again. This shows hidden springs of humanity in spots which look dead and barren. It proves that the deeper truth in her nature, which can survive such career of cruel cowardliness, is not greed, but reverence for unselfish ideals. It would be altogether unjust, both to us and to Europe, to say that she has fascinated the modern Eastern mind by the mere exhibition of her power. Through the smoke of cannons and dust of markets the light of her moral nature has shone bright, and she has brought to us the ideal of ethical freedom, whose foundation lies deeper than social conventions and whose province of activity is world-wide.

The East has instinctively felt, even through her aversion, that she has a great deal to learn from Europe, not merely about the materials of power, but about its inner source, which is of mind and of the moral nature of man.

Europe has been teaching us the higher obligations of public good above those of the family and the clan, and the sacredness of law, which makes society independent of individual caprice, secures for it continuity of progress, and guarantees justice to all men of all positions in life. Above all things Europe has held high before our minds the banner of liberty, through centuries of martyrdom and achievement,—liberty of conscience, liberty of thought and action, liberty in the ideals of art and literature. And because Europe has won our deep respect, she has become so dangerous for us where she is turbulently weak and false,—dangerous like poison when it is served along with our best food. There is one safety for us upon which we hope we may count, and that is, that we can claim Europe herself, as our ally, in our resistance to her temptations and to her violent encroachments; for she has ever carried her own standard of perfection, by which we can measure her falls and gauge her degrees of failure, by which we can call her before her own tribunal and put her to shame,—the shame which is the sign of the true pride of nobleness.

But our fear is, that the poison may be more powerful than the food, and what is strength in her to-day may not be the sign of health, but the contrary; for it may be temporarily caused by the upsetting of the balance of life. Our fear is that evil has a fateful fascination, when it assumes dimensions which are colossal,—and though at last it is sure to lose its centre of gravity, by its abnormal disproportion, the mischief which it creates before its fall may be beyond reparation.

Therefore I ask you to have the strength of faith and clarity of mind to know for certain, that the lumbering structure of modern progress, riveted by the iron bolts of efficiency, which runs upon the wheels of ambition, cannot hold together for long. Collisions are certain to occur; for it has to travel upon organized lines, it is too heavy to choose its own course freely; and once it is off the rails, its endless train of vehicles is dislocated. A day will come, when it will fall in a heap of ruin and cause serious obstruction to the traffic of the world. Do we not see signs of this even now? Does not the voice come to us, through the din of war, the shrieks of hatred, the wailings of despair, through the churning up of the unspeakable filth which has been accumulating for ages in the bottom of this civilization,—the voice which cries to our soul, that the tower of national selfishness, which goes by the name of patriotism, which has raised its banner of treason against heaven, must totter and fall with a crash, weighed down by its own bulk, its flag kissing the dust, its light extinguished? My brothers, when the red light of conflagration sends up its crackle of laughter to the stars, keep your faith upon those stars and not upon the fire of destruction. For when this conflagration consumes itself and dies down, leaving its memorial in ashes, the eternal light will again shine in the East,—the East which has been the birth-place of the morning sun of man's history. And who knows if that day has not already dawned, and the sun not risen, in the Easternmost horizon of Asia? And I offer, as did my ancestor rishis, my salutation to that sunrise of the East, which is destined once again to illumine the whole world.

I know my voice is too feeble to raise itself above the uproar of this ustling time, and it is easy for any street urchin to fling against me the epithet f 'unpractical.' It will stick to my coat-tail, never to be washed away, effectively xcluding me from the consideration of all respectable persons. I know what risk one runs from the vigorously athletic crowds to be styled an idealist in ıese days, when thrones have lost their dignity and prophets have become an nachronism, when the sound that drowns all voices is the noise of the market-lace. Yet when, one day, standing on the outskirts of Yokohama town, ristling with its display of modern miscellanies, I watched the sunset in your outhern sea, and saw its peace and majesty among your pine-clad hills,—with he great Fujiyama growing faint against the golden horizon, like a god vercome with his own radiance,—the music of eternity welled up through the vening silence, and I felt that the sky and the earth and the lyrics of the dawn nd the dayfall are with the poets and idealists, and not with the marketsmen obustly contemptuous of all sentiments,— that, after the forgetfulness of his wn divinity, man will remember again that heaven is always in touch with his vorld, which can never be abandoned for good to the hounding wolves of the ıodern era, scenting human blood and howling to the skies.

1915

THE MEETING OF THE EAST AND THE WEST

For over a century and a half India has borne a foreign rule which is western. Whether she has been benefited by it, whether her arts and industries have made progress, her wealth increased and her opportunities of self-government multiplied, are a matter of controversy which is of very little material interest to the present generation of our countrymen, as it cannot change facts. Even from the point of view of historical curiosity it has a very imperfect value, for we are not allowed to remember all facts except in strict privacy. So I am not going to enter into any discussion which is sure to lead to an unsatisfactory conclusion or consequences.

But one thing about which there has been no attempt at concealment or difference of opinion is that the East and the West have remained far apart even after these years of relationship. When two different peoples have to deal with each other and yet without forming any true bond of union, it is sure to become a burden, whatever benefit may accrue from it. And when we say that we suffer from the dead weight of mutual alienation we do not mean any adverse criticism of the motive or the system of government, for the problem is vast and it affects all mankind. It inspires in our minds awe verging upon despair when we come to think that all the world has been bared open to a civilization which has not the spiritual power in it to unite, but which can only exploit and destroy and domineer and can make even its benefits an imposition from outside while claiming its price in loyalty of heart.

Therefore it must be admitted that this civilization, while it abounds in the riches of mind, lacks in a great measure to one truth which is of the highest importance to all humanity; the truth which man even in the dimmest dawn of his history felt, however vaguely it might be. This is why, when things go against them, the peoples brought up in the spirit of modern culture furiously seek for some change in organization and system, as if the human world were a mere intellectual game of chess where winning and losing depended upon the placing of pawns. They forget that for a man winning a game may be the greatest of his losses.

Men began their career of history with a faith in a Personal Being in relation to whom they had their unity among themselves. This was no mere belief in ghost but in the deeper reality of their oneness which is the basis of their moral ideals. This was the one great comprehension of truth which gave life and light to all the best creative energies of man, making us feel the touch of the infinite in our personality.

Naturally the consciousness of unity had its beginning in the limited area of race—the race which was the seed-plot of all human ideals. And therefore, and first, men had their conception of God as a tribal God which restricted their moral obligation within the bounds of their own people.

The first Aryan immigrants came to India with their tribal gods and

special ceremonials and their conflict with the original inhabitants of India seemed to have no prospect of termination. In the midst of this struggle the conception of a universal soul, the spiritual bond of unity in all creatures, took its birth in the better minds of the time. This heralded a change of heart and along with it a true basis of reconciliation.

During the Mahomedan conquest of India, behind the political turmoil our inner struggle was spiritual. Like Asoka of the Buddhist age Akbar also had his vision of spiritual unity. A succession of great men of those centuries, both Hindu saints and Mahomedan sufis, was engaged in building a kingdom of souls over which ruled the one God who was the god of Mahomedans, as well as Hindus.

In India this striving after spiritual realization still shows activity. And I feel sure that the most important event of modern India has been the birth and life-work of Rammohan Roy, for it is a matter of the greatest urgency that the East and the West should meet and unite in hearts. Through Rammohan Roy was given the first true response of India when the West knocked at her door. He found the basis of our union in our own spiritual inheritance, in faith in the reality of the oneness of man in Brahma.

Other men of intellectual eminence we have seen in our days who have borrowed their lessons from the West. This schooling makes us intensely conscious of the separateness of our people giving rise to a patriotism fiercely exclusive and contemptuous. This has been the effect of the teaching of the west everywhere in the world. It has roused up a universal spirit of suspicious antipathy. It incites each people to strain all resources for taking advantages of others by force or by cunning. This cult of organized pride and self-seeking, this deliberate falsification of moral perspective in our view of humanity, has also invaded with a new force men's minds in India. If it does contain any truth along with its falsehood we must borrow it from others to mend our defect in mental balance. But, at the same time, I feel sure India is bid to give expression to the truth belonging to her own inner life.

Today the western people have come in contact with all races of the world when their moral adjustment has not yet been made true for this tremendous experience. The reality of which they are most fervidly conscious is the reality of the Nation. It has served them up to a certain point, just as some amount of boisterous selfishness, pugnacious and inconsiderate, may serve us in our boyhood, but makes mischief when carried into our adult life of larger social responsibilities. But the time has come at last when the western people are beginning to feel nearer home what the cult of the nation has been to humanity, they who have reaped all its benefits, with a great deal of its cost thrown upon the shoulders of others.

It is natural that they should realize humanity when it is nearest themselves. It increases their sensibility to a verv high pitch, within a narrow range, keeping their conscience inactive where it is apt to be uncomfortable.

But when we forget truth for our own convenience, truth does not forget us. Up to a certain limit, she tolerates neglect, but she is sure to put in her

appearance, to exact her dues with full arrears, on an occasion which we grumble at as inappropriate and at a provocation which seems trivial. This makes us feel the keen sense of the injustice of providence, as does the rich man of questionable history, whose time-honoured wealth has attained the decency of respectability, if he is suddenly threatened with an exposure.

We have observed that when the West is visited by a sudden calamity, she cannot understand why it should happen at all in God's world. The question has never occurred to her, with any degree of intensity, why people in other parts of the world should suffer. But she has to know that humanity is a truth which nobody can mutilate and yet escape its hurt himself. Modern civilization has to be judged not by its balance-sheet of imports and exports, luxuries of rich men, lengths of dreadnoughts, breadth of dependencies and tightness of grasping diplomacy. In this judgment of history, we from the East are the principal witnesses, who must speak the truth without flinching, however difficult it may be for us and unpleasant for others. Our voice is not the voice of authority, with the power of arms behind it, but the voice of suffering which can only count upon the power of truth to make itself heard.

There was a time when Europe had started on her search for the soul. In spite of all digressions she was certain that man must find his true wealth by becoming true. She knew that the value of his wealth was not merely subjective, but its eternal truth was in a love ever active in man's world. Then came a time when science revealed the greatness of the material universe and violently diverted Europe's attention to gaining things in place of inner perfection. Science has its own great meaning for man. It proves to him that he can bring his reason to co-operate with nature's laws, making them serve the higher ends of humanity; that he can transcend the biological world of natural selection and create his own world of moral purposes by the help of nature's own laws. It is Europe's mission to discover that Nature does not stand in the way of our self-realization, but we must deal with her with truth in order to invest our idealism with reality and make it permanent.

This higher end of science is attained where its help has been requisitioned for the general alleviation of our wants and sufferings, where its gifts are for all men. But it fearfully fails where it supplies means for personal gains and attainment of selfish power. For its temptations are so stupendously great that our moral strength is not only overcome but fights against its own forces under the cover of such high-sounding names as patriotism and nationality. This has made the relationship of human races inhuman, burdening it with repression and restriction where it faces the weak and brandishing it with vengefulness and competition of ferocity where it meets the strong. It has made war and preparation for war the normal condition of all nations, and has polluted diplomacy, the carrier of the political pestilence, with cruelty and dishonourable deception.

Yet those who have trust in human nature cannot but feel certain that the West will come out triumphant and the fruit of the centuries of her endeavour will not be trampled under foot in the mad scrimmage for things which are not

of the spirit of man. Feeling the perplexity of the present-day entanglements she is groping for a better system and a wiser diplomatic arrangement. But she will have to recognize, perhaps at the end of her series of death-lessons, that it is an intellectual Pharisaism to have faith only in building pyramids of systems, that she must realize truth in order to be saved, that continually gathering fuel to feed her desire will only lead to world-wide incendiarism. One day she will wake up to set a limit to her greed and turbulent pride and find in compensation that she has an ever-lasting life.

Europe is great. She has been dowered by her destiny with a location and climate and race combination producing a history rich with strength, beauty and tradition of freedom. Nature in her soil challenged man to put forth all his forces never overwhelming his mind into a passivity of fatalism. It imparted in the character of her children the energy and daring which never acknowledge limits to their claims and also at the same time an intellectual sanity, a restraint in imagination, a sense of proportion in their creative works, and sense of reality in all their aspirations. They explored the secrets of existence, measured and mastered them; they discovered the principle of unity in nature not through the help of meditation or abstract logic, but by boldly crossing barriers of diversity and peeping behind the screen. They surprised themselves into nature's great storehouse of powers and there they had their fill of temptation.

Europe is fully conscious of her greatness and that itself is the reason why she does not know where her greatness may fail her. There have been periods of history when great races of men forgot their own souls in the pride and enjoyment of their power and possessions. They were not even aware of this lapse because things and institutions assumed such magnificence that all their attention was drawn outside their true selves. Just as nature in her aspect of bewildering vastness may have the effect of humiliating man, so also his own accumulation may produce the self-abasement which is spiritual apathy by stimulating all his energy towards his wealth and not his welfare. Through this present war has come the warning to Europe that her things have been getting better of her truth and in order to be served she must find her soul and her God and fulfil her purpose by carrying her ideals into all continents of the earth and not sacrifice them to her greed of money and dominion.

1918

AT THE CROSS ROADS

AT THE PRESENT moment the World Drama is at the change of its acts, and we do not know towards what denouement it is moving. This uncertainty has given rise to a universal perturbation of mind, from which India is not free. But having remained for long outside the arena of living and creative history, we are now, in this crisis, at a loss to know what to do, or how to think. Our mind is enveloped in the dust-storm of exaggerated hopes and fears, and this blinds us to the limitation of facts. When the promise of self-government suddenly showed signs of fulfilment, we failed to see clearly what it meant to us and how to claim it with justice. The hope of it was spread before us like a feast before the famine-stricken, and we did not know whether there was more danger in gorging ourselves or in desisting from it. The cruelty of the situation lies in the abnormal condition to which we have come through long years of deprivation.

I am fully aware that we have not had the training of taking up the tremendous responsibility of governing our country. The present upheaval in the West clearly shows what terrible power has gradually been concentrated in certain parts of the world, and what a menace it is to those who never had the opportunity or foresight to prepare to meet it. I have not the slightest doubt in any mind as to what would follow if India were completely left to herself. If the birth-throes of the new Japan were to happen at the present time, we know it would be throttled at its birth even as New Persia was.

But our problem is, how are we to receive our lessons in political wisdom discreetly gradual? When an Englishman in England discusses this, he bases his discussion on his full faith in his own countrymen. Personally, I myself have a great admiration for the English people. But it is not the best ideals of a people that govern a foreign country. The unnaturalness of the situation stands in the way, and everything tending to encourage the baser passions of man,—the contemptuous pride of power, the greed of acquisition,—comes upper-most. The responsibility of the weak is tremendous. They keep themselves too obscure to be able to claim human consideration, and the conscience of the strong grows inactive for want of proper stimulus. It is sure to cause moral degeneracy in men to exercise habitually authority upon an alien people and therefore not to encounter the checks that arise from the relationship of natural sympathy. This is evident to us, not only in the callous arrogance of the bureaucracy, but also in the policy of most of the Anglo-Indian newspapers, whose consistent chorus of clamour against the least expression of Indian aspiration, or the possibility of our gaining the slightest privilege now held by the rulers, becomes virulently cruel. It creates a vicious circle,—the helplessness of the governed sapping the moral manhood of the governors, and that again reacting upon the governed, prolonging and deepening their helplessness.

This is the reason why most of our countrymen find small consolation when they are told that the rights and the power of the government of their

country will come to them gradually, as they are being made fit, from the hands which hold that power now. The gift is to be cautiously doled out to us by somebody who is critic, judge and donor combined,—and, naturally, not an over-enthusiastic donor. If we could be certain of a genuinely sympathetic guidance we would be content with very little at the commencement. But not having that full confidence in the bureaucratic agency of our donors, our people at the very outset claim those powers which, consciously or unconsciously, may be set against them in making it impossible for them to prove their fitness. No one can pretend to say that the British Government in India has been or ever can be disinterested. It is a dependency upon which depends the prosperity of England, though time may some day prove that such prosperity has not been for the good of the ruling country. But so long as the present cult of the self-worship of the Nation prevails, the subject races can only expect the fragmentary crumbs of benefit, and not the bread of life, from the hands of the powerful. It will ever be easy for the latter to find plausible arguments to keep the real power in their own hands and to prolong that state in which such arguments cannot effectively be refuted. For the ideal of the Nation is not a moral one,—all its obligations being based upon selfishness with a capital S. It principally recognizes expediency in its own conduct and power in that of its neighbours. And as expediency, in God's world, cannot wholly be dissociated from a moral foundation, it finds its place in the Nation's government of the alien people; but it is there on sufferance, it is only secondary, and therefore the Nation's relationship with the non-Europeans easily breaks out into rampage, which is, to speak mildly, not Christian.*

The question remains, what are we to do? Charity, on the one side, self-congratulatory and superior: humble acceptance of small favours on the other side, laudatory and grateful,—this is not the proper solution. We must have power in order to claim justice which is real. It is a blessing that we have the opposition of the powerful to overcome, that a boon cannot easily be given to us, even when there is some amount of willingness on the part of the giver. We must gain it through victory and never otherwise.

But whenever we speak of power and victory, the words at once conjure up pictures in our minds of Dreadnoughts, long-range guns and massacre of men by millions; because these belong to the great festival days of the religion of Nation-worship, when human sacrifices must be without limit. For, political and commercial ambition is the ambition of cannibalism, and through its years of accumulation it must get ready for its carnival of suicide.

I cannot imagine that we shall ever be able to enter into competition about their own methods and objects with these nation-worshippers, and the boon of their power which they get from their gods is not for us. We must confess that, in spite of considerable exceptions, the Hindu population of India does not consist of martial races. We do not have any natural pleasure or pride in indulging in orgies of massacre for the sake of its glory. Some of our modern disciples of the West may blush to own it, but it is true that the

* See passages quoted from M. Anatole France in "Gleanings" in this number.

religious training which we have got for ages has made us unfit for killing men with anything like a zest. No doubt, war was held to be a necessity, but only a particular body of men was specially trained for this work, and, for the rest of the members of society, even the killing of animals was held to be a sin. There is something very harshly unnatural and mock-heroic in the shrill pitch to which we have tuned our voice while vociferating that we are fighters and we must be fighters. I do not mean to say that by training and proper incentives a large number of us cannot be made into soldiers, but at the same time it will serve no good purpose if we delude ourselves into thinking that this is a vocation of life in which we can excel. And if, for the want of natural ferocity in our blood, we cannot excel in this the Europeans, who at present hold the world in their grasp, our soldiers' training will merely entitle us to fight in a subordinate position, which, from a material point of view, will bring us meagre benefits and from a higher one will be productive of evil.

I have been accused of going to the absurdity of the extreme for insisting upon an idealism which cannot be practical. But I assert that the absurdity is not in the idealism itself, but in our own moral shortsightedness. What they mean by saying that we must be practical is that we must live, and in this one cannot but agree, for suicide can never be an ultimate object for any creature. But fortunately for man his existence is not merely physical or even political. Man has attained all that is best in him by strongly believing that there are things for which he can afford to die. To ask him to lay down his life for some political good, and at the same time to be miserly where the moral good of humanity is in view, is to ask him to pay the highest price yet refuse to accept the thing of the highest value.

There are things in which men *do* go to extremity in the teeth of practical common sense. We have heard of instances where men, set adrift on the sea without provisions, have looked upon each other as possible food in case of emergency. But those exceptions among them who could not think of such an enormity in any conceivable circumstance, have done more permanent service to man by refusing to eat human flesh and dying, than those who survived by following the contrary course. And for nations also, it is wise not to indulge in cannibalism even at the risk of non-survival. For true survival is to live beyond life.

We must bear in mind that European civilization, which is based on militant Nationalism, is on its trial in this war. We do not know what is going to be the end of it; for this may not be the last of such wars in Europe. But one thing has been made quite evident, that the attainment of political power has not the moral ideal behind it which can give it the true permanence of finality. Greece still lives where she was truly great, not in her possessions, but in her mind, and Rome survived the wreck of Empires where she attained the immortal. For centuries the Jews have had no political existence, but they live in the best ideals of Europe leavening its intellectual and spiritual life. The political ambitions of fighting races leave no other legacy to humanity but the legacy of ruins; and the power which grows tremendous, following its narrow

channel of self-seeking, is sure to burst its bonds and end in a deluge of destruction.

And therefore, let us not seek the power which is in killing men and plundering them, but the moral power to stand against it, the moral power to suffer,—not merely in passive apathy, but in the enthusiasm of active purpose. This is an age of transition. The Dawn of a great To-morrow is breaking through its bank of clouds and the call of New Life comes with its message that man's strength is of the spirit, and not of the machine of organization. It will be the greatest sign of weakness in us,—the most abject defeat,—if we still cling to the atheistic faith that those nations who thrive upon their victims are great because they are powerful, and that sacrifices have to be brought to the altar of their false gods.

I know that an instinctive faith in the adequacy of moral ideals and the inner strength of the spirit for building up the world anew from its wreckage will be held as the sign of ignorance of world politics; for it does not wholly tally with the experience of the past. But all the fearful danger of the present day has come from that experience hardening into a crust obstructing the growth of spiritual humanity,—the humanity which aspires after an infinite inner perfection. The present-day Civilized Man, disillusioned and doubting, suffers from the moral senility of prudent worldliness, that knows too much but does not believe. Faith is of the future; it may lead us into danger or apparent futility; but Truth waits there for us to be courted at the risk of death or failure.

The immense power of faith which man possesses has lately been concentrated on his material possibilities. He ignored all checks from his past experiences when he believed that he could fly in the air; and even repeated failures and deaths have not deterred him from attaining this seeming impossibility. But he has grown cynically sceptic concerning the infinite reality of the moral laws.

The time for this prudent man has come near its end. The world is waiting for the birth of the Child, who believes more than he knows, who is to be the crowned King of the future, who will come amply supplied with provisions for his daring adventures in the moral world, for his explorations in the region of man's inner being.

We have heard that Modern Russia is floundering in its bottomless abyss of idealism because she has missed the sure foothold of the stern logic of Real Politik. We know very little of the history of the present revolution in Russia, and with the scanty materials in our hands we cannot be certain if she, in her tribulations, is giving expression to man's indomitable soul against prosperity built upon moral nihilism. All that we can say is that the time to judge has not yet come,—especially as Real Politik is in such a sorry plight itself. No doubt if Modern Russia *did* try to adjust herself to the orthodox tradition of Nation-worship, she would be in a more comfortable situation to-day, but this tremendousness of her struggle and hopelessness of her tangles do not, in themselves, prove that she has gone astray. It is not unlikely that, as a nation, she will fail; but if she fails with the flag of true ideals in her hands, then her

failure will fade, like the morning star, only to usher in the sunrise of the New Age. If India must have her ambition, let it not be to scramble for the unholy feast of the barbarism of the past night, but to take her place in the procession of the morning going on the pilgrimage of truth,—the truth of man's soul.

1918

THE MESSAGE OF THE FOREST

THE PAST NOT only contains, in its depths, the unrealized future, but in part the realized future itself. Everybody admits the truth, that, in the grandfather, lies dormant the potential grandson, who is to carry the growth of his ancestry to a further stage, or in a new direction. But it is also true that the grandson is practically born in the grandfather. New additions are made and modifications effected, but some keynote, that is to dominate the racial life, has already been achieved in the life of the grandfather.

This is the reason, why every race of people has its tradition of the Golden Age in the past, because we never can trust our future, if it does not carry some great promise bequeathed to it. It is not enough for us to know, that our future is growing out clearer from the nebulous adumbration of a primitive age, we must also be assured that it has already shown itself distinct in its achievements in the past. Every great people holds its history so valuable because of this, because, it contains not mere memories, but hope, and therefore the image of the future. Man has his instinctive faith in heredity. He feels, that, in heredity, that which is to come has been proved in that which has been,—in great heredity, the great conclusion is perpetually present in the process. And all history is man's credential of his future, signed and sealed by his past.

The physical organization of the race has certain vital memories, which are persistent, which fashion its nose and eyes in a particular shape, regulate its stature and deal with the pigment of its skin. In the ideal of a race, there also run memories that remain constant, or, in case of alien mixture, come back repeatedly, even after the lapse of long intervals. These are the compelling forces, that secretly and inevitably fashion the future of a people and give characteristic shape to its civilization. In our Shastras, it is held that our desires are the creative factors which originate and guide our future births. Likewise every race has its innate desires, of its former days, leading it through the repeated new births of its history. Any people which lacks, in its racial mind, these inherited aspirations, merely drifts, till it sinks in the current of time; it never creates its own history. In a word, it does not renew its birth, but is merged in the amorphous vagueness of a ghostly existence.

Therefore, it is of great importance for us to know, whether, as a people, we carry in our subconscious mind some primal aspiration, which alone can guarantee us a definite future of our own. If we still have that, strong and living, it will save us from extinction, or from the perpetual shame,—worse than death,—of the life of imitation, or parasitism. When we are threatened with loss of self-respect; when our mind is overwhelmed with the idea, that there can be only one type of civilization worth the name, and that a foreign one; when our one conscious desire is to strive with all our might, by begging, borrowing or stealing, towards some ideal of perfection which can only be related to us, as a mask to a face, or a wig to a head,—then our only hope lies in discovering some profound creative desire persistent in the heart of our

race, in the subconscious mind of our people. For, in the long run, it is our subconscious nature which wins, and it is the deeper unseen current of the mind which secretly cuts its own path and reaches its own goal,—not the conscious waves on the surface, which clamorously make themselves obvious and vigorously storm at the present time.

I have said elsewhere, that the environment, in which we see the past of India, is the forest, the memory of which permeates our classical literature and still haunts our minds. The legends related in our great epics cluster under the sublime shade of those ancient forests; and, in the forest, the most intense pathos of human life found its background in the greatest of our romantic dramas. The memory of these sacred forests is the one great inheritance which India ever cherishes through all her political vicissitudes and economic disturbances.

But we must know, that these forests were not merely topographical in their significance. We have seen that the history of the Northmen of Europe is resonant with the association of the sea. That sea, also, is not a mere physical fact, but represents certain ideals of life which still guide their history and inspire all their creations. In the sea, Nature presented herself to these men in her aspect of a danger, of a barrier, which seemed to be at constant war with the land and its children. The sea was the challenge of untamed Nature to the indomitable human soul. And man did not flinch; he fought and won; and the spirit of fight continued in him. He looked upon his place in the world as extorted from a hostile scheme of things, retained in the teeth of opposition. His cry is the cry of triumph of defiant Man against the rest of the universe.

This is about the people who lived by the sea, and rode on it as on a wild champing horse, clutching it by its mane and making it render service from shore to shore. But in the level tracts of *Aryavarta* men found no barrier between their lives and the Grand Life that permeates the Universe. The forest gave them shelter and shade, fruit and flower, fodder and fuel; it entered into a close living relation with their work and leisure and necessity, and in this way made it easy for them to know their own lives as associated with the larger life. They could not think of their surroundings as lifeless, separate, or inimical. So the view of the Truth, which these men found, was distinctly different from that of those of whom we have spoken above; and their relationship with this world also took a different turn, as they came to realize that the gifts of light and air, of food and drink, did not come from either sky or tree or soil, but had their fount in the all-pervading consciousness and joy of universal life. They uttered quite simply and naturally यदिदम् किञ्च सर्व्वम् प्राण एजति निष्टतम्—"All that is, vibrates with life, having emerged from the Supreme Life."

When we know this world as alien to us then we know it as a thing mechanical, built by a divine mechanic or by a chance combination of blind forces. Then our relation to it becomes the relation of utility, and we set up our own machines or mechanical methods to deal with it and make as much profit as our knowledge of its mechanism allows us to do. Then we are apt to say that Knowledge is power. This view of things does not altogether play us false, for

the machine has its place in this world. And therefore, not only this material universe, but also human beings can be used as machines and made to yield results. But the view of the world which India has taken is summed up in one compound word—सच्चिदानन्द. Its meaning is that Reality, which is essentially one, has three aspects. The first is *sat*, the principle of Being, whose first information comes to us through our senses; it relates us to all things through the relationship of common existence. The second is *chit*, the principle of Knowing; it relates us to all things through the relationship of mind. The third is *ananda*—the principle of Enjoying—which unites us with all things through the relationship of love. Our consciousness of the world as that of the sum total of things that exist or that are governed by universal laws is imperfect according to the true Indian view,—but it is perfect when our consciousness realizes all things as spiritually one with it and therefore capable of giving us joy. Our text of daily meditation contains the truth of the one and the same creative force appearing in an undivided stream of manifestation in our consciousness and in the world of which we are conscious. They are one, as the East and the West are one, which only our self divides into contradictions. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realizing our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy and emancipation of consciousness, not alienating and dominating it but comprehending and uniting it with us in blissful union. The Man whom you only use is a machine; the Man whom you only study is a material for your knowledge. But your friend is neither a machine to you nor a psychological curiosity, (though consciously or unconsciously he does take his part as a machine of work and as an object of study for you), his ultimate value lies in his giving you opportunity to lose yourself in his love. This is his aspect of *ananda*—his truest aspect for you, which comprehends his other two aspects in harmony. And to know the highest truth of all existence as that of a friend is truly Indian. This view of the world as the world of life and love, as the manifestation of the Supreme Soul whose nature is to realize his unity in the endlessness of the varied, has come to us from the great peace of our ancient forest.

When Vikramāditya became king, Ujjain a great capital, and Kālidāsa its poet, the age of India's forest retreats had passed. Then we had taken our stand in the midst of the great concourse of humanity, and the Chinese and the Hun, the Scythian and the Persian, the Greek and the Roman, had crowded round us. But even in this age of pride and prosperity, the longing love and awe of reverence with which its poet sang about the hermitage, shows what was the dominant ideal that occupied the mind of India, what was the one current of memory that continually flowed back through her life.

In Kālidāsa's drama *Shakuntala*, also, the hermitage, which dominates the play, overshadowing even the king's palace, has the same idea running through,—the recognition of the kinship of man with conscious and unconscious creation alike.

A poet of a later age, while describing a hermitage in his *Kadambari*, tells

of the posture of devoutness in the flowering lianas as they bow to the wind; of the sacrifice offered by the trees scattering their blossoms; of the grove sounding with the lessons chanted by the neophytes, and the *mantras* which the parrots, constantly hearing, had learned to pronounce; of the wild fowl enjoying *Vaishva-deva-bali-pinda*—the food offered to the divinity which is in all creatures,—and of the ducks coming up from the lake, near by, for their portion of the grass-seed, spread in the cottage yards to dry; of the deer caressing with their tongues the young hermit boys. It is again the same story. The hermitage shines out, in all our ancient literature, as the place where the chasm between man and the rest of creation has been bridged.

In the drama of other countries, where the human characters violently drown our attention in the vortex of their passions, Nature occasionally peeps in, but she is almost always a trespasser, who has to submit urgent excuses, or bow apologetically and depart. But in all our dramas, which still retain their fame, such as *Mrichchhakatika, Shakuntala, Uttara-Rama-Charita* Nature stands on her own right, proving that she has her great function, to impart the peace of the eternal to the human passions and to mitigate their violent agitations which often come from the instability of spiritual lameness.

The frenzied fury of passion, described in two of Shakespeare's youthful poems, stands isolated upon its own pedestal of unashamed conspicuity. It is wrenched away naked from the cover of the All; it has not the green earth or the blue sky around it; the many-coloured veil of nature has been impatiently swept away from its face, bringing to our view the fever which is in man's desires, and not the healing balm which encircles it in the universe.

Ritusamhara is clearly a work of Kalidasa's immaturity. The song of youthful love sung in it sounds from the fundamental bass notes of human passion,—it does not reach the sublime height of reticence that there is in *Shakuntala* or *Kumara Sambhava*. But the tune of these voluptuous outbreaks, being set to the varied harmony of Nature's symphony, loses its delirious shrillness in the expanse of the open sky. The moon-beams of the summer evening, resonant with the murmuring flow of fountains, add to it their own melody; in its rhythm sways the *Kadamba* grove, glistening in the first cool rain of the season; and the south breezes waft into its heart the wistfulness of the scent of the mango flowers.

In the third canto of *Kumara Sambhava*, while describing the boisterous emergence of youth at the sudden coming of *Madana* (Eros), Kalidasa has been careful to avoid giving this outburst of passion an abnormal supremacy within the narrow field of view of exclusive humanity. His genius basked in the sunshine of the human spirit, where it pervades the spring flower and the harvest of the autumn; and that genius never played at focussing it into a point of ignition upon the naked fluttering heart. Kalidasa has shown a true reverence to the divine love-making of Sati by making his narration of it as a central white lotus floating on the world-wide immensity of youth, in which the animals and trees have their rhythm of life-throbs. It is a sacred flame of longing whose lamp is the universe.

Not only its third canto, but the whole of the *Kumara Sambhava* poem is painted upon a limitless canvas. Its inner idea is deep and of all time. It answers the one question that humanity asks through all its endeavours:—How is the birth of the hero to be brought about,—the brave one who can defy and vanquish the evil demon, when he sweeps upon the scene, laying waste heaven's own kingdom? This is the greatest of all problems for each individual, and it forces itself in ever-new, ever-recurring forms upon each race and nation, and this is the one problem which perists in most of our poet's works,—in his *Shakuntala*, *Raghuvamsha* and *Kumara Sambhava*.

It becomes evident that such a problem had become acute in Kalidasa's time, when the old simplicity of Hindu life had broken up. The Hindu kings, forgetful of their kingly duties, had become self-seeking epicureans, and India was being repeatedly devastated by the Shakas.

But what answer does the poem give to the question it raises?—Not that more armaments were needed, or that a league of powers should be formed, or that some mechanical adjustment of political balance had to be effected. Its message is that the cause of weakness lies in the inner life of the soul. It is in some break of harmony with the Good, some dissociation from the True. When gain is completed by giving up, when love is fulfilled by self-sacrifice, when passion is purified by the penance of the soul, then only is heroism born,—the heroism which can save mankind from all defeat and disaster. When the ascetic Shiva—the Good—was lost in the passive immensity of his solitude, heaven was in peril. And when beautiful Sati—the Real—was all by herself, in her unwedded self-seclusion, the demons were triumphant. Only from the union of the exuberant freedom of the Real with the tranquil restraint of the Good comes the fullest strength.

Viewed from the outside, India, in the time of Kalidasa, appeared to have reached the zenith of civilization, excelling as she did in luxury, literature and the arts. Kalidasa himself was not free from the prevailing tone, and the outer embellishment of his poetry is as daintily luxurious as must have been the decorative art of the period. This, however, is only one aspect in which his age influenced the poet.

But what sudden passion for sacrifice, for the austere discipline of the life of aspiration, troubled our Goddess of Poesy amidst the luxury of her golden bower? It was the eternal message of the forest, that can never be silenced, and like a refrain, simple in its purity, comes up again and again, through all noisy distractions of discord,—the message to free our consciousness from the accumulations of desire, to win our immortality, by breaking through the sheath of self, the self which belongs to death. From his seat beside all the glories of Vikramaditya's throne, the poet's heart yearned for the purity of India's past age of spiritual striving. And it was this yearning which took shape and impelled him to go back to the annals of the ancient kings of Raghu's line.

'I fain would sing,' says Kalidasa, in his prologue, 'of those whose purity went back to the day of their birth, whose striving went forward till attainment, whose empire knew no bounds but the seas, whose adventurous journeys

reached up to the high heaven, who offered oblations to the sacred fire in accordance with injunctions, made gifts to the needy in accordance with their wants, awarded punishments in accordance with the crime, and regulated every wakeful activity in accordance with the hour,—who accumulated treasure for the sake of redistribution, tempered their utterance for the sake of truth, desired victories for the sake of glory, entered into wedlock for the sake of progeny,—who practised learning in their childhood, attended to wealth in their youth, took to the hermitage in their old age, cast away their bodies when they had attained the supreme union. Of these would I sing, though I lack all wealth of language; for their great merits, entering my ears, have disturbed my heart.'

But it was not in a paean of praise that his poem ended. What had troubled his heart becomes clear, when we come to the end of his Raghuvamsha. What was the life story of the founder of this line of Kings? Where did it begin?

The heroic life of Raghu had its prologue in a hermitage, showing that its origin was in a life of purity and self-restraint, led there by Raghu's royal parents. The poem is not ushered in with the pomp and circumstance befitting the history of a great kingly line. King Dilip, with his consort, Queen Sudakshina, has entered upon the life of the forest. The great monarch is busy tending the cattle of the hermitage. Thus opens the Raghuvamsha amidst scenes of simplicity and self-denial. But it ends in the palace of magnificence, in the wealth and luxury which divert the current of energy from the truth of life to the heaps of things. There is brilliance in this ending, as there is in the conflagration which destroys and devastates. Peaceful as the dawn, radiant as the tawny-haired hermit boy, is the calm strength of the restrained language in which the poet tells us of the kingly glory crowned with the halo of purity,—beginning his poem, as the day begins, in the serene solemnity of its sunrise. And lavish are the colours in which he describes the end, as of the evening, eloquent for a time with its sumptuous splendour of sunset, but overtaken at last by the devouring darkness which sweeps away all its brilliance into the fathomless abyss of night.

In this beginning and this ending of his poem, lies hidden the message of the forest which found its voice in the poet's words. With a suppressed sigh he is saying; 'Look on that which was and that which is! In the days when the future glowed gloriously ahead, self-discipline was esteemed as the highest path, self-renunciation the greatest treasure, but when downfall had become imminent, the hungry fires of desire aflame at a hundred different points, dazzled the eyes of all beholders.'

When the lust of self-aggrandizement is unbridled, the harmony between enjoyment and renunciation is destroyed. By concentrating our pride or desire upon a limited field, the field of the animal life, we seek to exaggerate a portion at the expense of the whole, the wholeness which is in man's life of the spirit. From this results evil. That is why renunciation becomes necessary,—not to lead to destitution, but to restoration, to win back the All.

Kalidasa in almost all his works, has depicted this break of harmony

between enjoyment and renunciation, between the life that loses itself in the sands of the self and the life that seeks its sea of eternity. And this is characteristically represented by the unbounded impetuousness of kingly splendour on one side and the serene strength of regulated desires on the other. I have already given above an illustration of this from the *Raghuvamsha.* Even in the minor drama of *Malavikagnimitra* we find the same thing in a different manner. It must never be thought that, in this play, the poet's deliberate object was to pander to his royal patron by inviting him to a literary orgy of lasciviousness. The very *Nandi* contradicts this and shows the object towards which this play is directed. The poet begins the drama with the prayer, सम्मार्गालोकयन् व्यपनयतु स नस्तामसीष्ठत्तिभोग:' 'Let God, to illumine for us the path of truth, sweep away our passions, bred of darkness.' The God, to whom this prayer is uttered, says the poet, is one in whose nature Eternal Woman is ever commingled, in an ascetic purity of love,—who stands in the sacred simplicity of barenness in the midst of his infinite wealth. The unified being of Hara and Parvati is the perfect symbolism of the eternal in the wedded love of man and woman. The poet opens his drama with the invocation of this spirit of the Divine Union. It is quite evident that this invocation carries the message in it with which he greeted his kingly audience. The whole drama is to show in vivid colour the utter ugliness of the treacherous falsehoods and cruelties inherent in all passions that are unchecked. In this play the conflict of ideals is between the king and the queen,—between Agnimitra and Dharini, between the insolent offence against all that is good and true, and the unlimited peace of forgiveness that dwells deep in the self-sacrifice of love. The great significance of this contrast lies hidden in the very names of the hero and the heroine of the drama. Though the name '*Agnimitra*' is historical, yet it symbolises in the poet's mind the desolating destructiveness of uncontrolled desire,—just as did the name of *Agnivarna* in *Raghuvamsha. Agnimitra,*—'the friend of the fire',—the reckless person, who in his love-making is playing with fire, not knowing that, all the time, it is scorching him black, till the seed of immortality perishes at the core of his being. And what a great name is *Dharini,* signifying the fortitude and forbearance that comes of the majesty of soul! What association it carries of the infinite dignity of love purified by the sacrificial fire of self-abnegation rising far above all insult of base betrayal! Can anybody doubt what effect the performance of this drama produced upon the royal looker-on, what searching of heart, what humility, what reverence for the love that claims our best worship by the offer of its patient worship of service!

In Shakuntala, this conflict of ideals has been shown all through the drama, by the contrast of the pompous heartlessness of the king's court and the natural purity of the hermitage, the contrast of the arrogance displaying itself upon the hollow eminence of convention, and the simplicity standing upon the altitude of truth. The message of the poet is uttered by the two hermit boys, when they enter the king's palace, just before the impending catastrophe of Shakuntala's life, the naked cruelty of which is skillfully hidden by the episode of the curse, though it was unbarred a moment before through the

shameless self-confession of fickleness by the king, when he listened to the lamentation of Hamsapadika, one of his numerous victims. The message is:

> अभ्यक्तमिव स्नातः शुचिरशुचिमिव प्रबुध इव सुप्तम्
> वचामिव स्वैरगतिर्जनमिह सुखसङिगतम् अवैमि।
>
> We look upon these devotees of pleasure as he, who has bathed, looks upon the unclean, as the pure in heart upon the polluted, as the wide awake soul looks upon the slothful slumberer, and as the one, who is free to move, looks upon the shackled.

And what is the inner meaning of the curse that follows the hermit girl in this drama, till she is purified by her penance? I am sure, according to the poet, it is the same curse from which his country at that time suffered. There were two guests who knocked at the gate of Shakuntala of whom one was accepted and the other refused. The king, as an embodiment of passion and worldliness, came to her and she readily yielded to his allurements. But when after that the duty of the higher life, the spirit of the forest ideal, stood before her in the guise of an ascetic, she in her absent-mindedness did not notice him. And what was the result? She lost her world of desire for which she had forsaken her truth. And in order to regain that world as her own by right she had to follow through suffering the path of self-conquest. The poet was aware of the two guests who sought entrance into the heart of his country,—the devotee of pleasure and power who comes secretly without giving his real name and insinuates himself into trustful acceptance, and the seeker of spiritual perfection who announces himself in a master's voice, in clear notes, अयमहं भोः—'I am here!' And to his dismay he found his country bâring her heart to the former to be betrayed by him. It is evident that kings of that period were deeply drawn into the eddy of self-indulgence and were fighting each other for power, the love of which leads men into the insanity of suicide. The fatal curse of falsehood is always generated when power and success are pursued for their own sake, when our baser passions shamelessly refuse all claims of justice and self-control. The poet had one lingering ray of hope in his heart. He could not but believe that his country had not lost her reverence for her *tapaswi*, the guest who brings to her door the message of everlasting life: only her mind was distracted by some temporary outbreak of temptation. He was certain that she would wake up in sanctifying sorrow, and give birth to her Bharata, the hero who would bring to her life unity and strength of truth. There was a note of assurance in the poet's voice when through his great poems Kumara-Sambhava and Shakuntala he called her to come back once again to her purity of life and realization of soul, the call which is true for other times and other countries also. For the curse still remains to be worked off by humanity for the inhospitable insult offered to the Eternal in Man.

The drama of Shakuntala opens with a hunting scene, where the king is in pursuit of an antelope. This indulgence in sport appears like a menace symbolising the spirit of the king's life clashing against the spirit of the forest-retreat, where all creatures find their protection of love. And the pleading of

the forest-dwellers to the king, to spare the life of the deer, helplessly innocent and beautiful, is the pleading that rises from the heart of the whole drama.

> न खलु न खलु बाण: सन्निपात्योऽयमस्मिन् ।
> मृदुनि मृगशरीरे पुष्प राशाविवाग्नि: ।।
>
> Never, oh never is the arrow meet for piercing the tender body of a deer, as the fire is not for burning flowers.

The living beauty, whose representative in this drama is Shakuntala, is not aggressively strong like the callous destructiveness of lust, but, through its frailness, it is sublimely great. And it is the poet's pleading which still rings in our ears against the ugly greed of commercialism in the modern age, against its mailed fist of earth-hunger, against the lust of the strong, which is grossly intent upon killing the Beautiful and piercing the heart of the Good to the quick. Once again sounds the warning of the forest, at the conclusion of the first act, when the king is engaged in fateful dalliance with the hermit girl : 'O *Tapaswis*, hasten to rescue the living spirit of the sacred forest, for Dushyanta, the lord of earth, whose pleasure is in hunting, is come.' It is the warning of India's past, and that warning still continues against the reckless carnival of the present time, celebrated by the lords of Earth, whose pleasure is in hunting to death with their ruthless machines all that is beautiful with the delicacy of life.

In *Kumara-Sambhava*, the friend and ally of Indra, the king of the Gods, is Madana, the god of desire. And he, in his blindness, imagines that he can unite Shiva and Parvati by the delusion created by the madness of the senses. It is the same as when we try to reach our perfection through wealth and power, through the intensity of boisterous self-seeking. That is not to be. At last Parvati's love was crowned with fulfilment through her penance of self-sacrifice. The moral of the *Kumara-Sambhava* is the same as the teaching of the Upanishat: त्यक्तत्तेन भुञ्जी , 'enjoy through renunciation'. मा गृध: कस्यस्विञ्जनम् 'Enjoyment not be through greed.'

One thing which we must remember is, that the life in ancient India was not all forest life,—nor is the heart the only organ we possess in our vital organism. But the heart lies in the centre of our body; it purifies our blood and sends our life-current through the ramifications of all the channels in our body to the extremities of our limbs. Our *tapovana* was just such a vital centre of our social body. In it throbbed the rhythm of our life's ebb and flow: it gave truth to our thoughts, right impulse to our feelings, and guiding force to our work. We distinctly see, from the works of our poet, that the teaching of the forest was not towards the inertia of passivity, but towards true heroism and victory. It was not towards suppression of action, but its purification, towards giving it freedom of life by removing obstructions.

We know of other great systems in which there is a special insistence upon sacrifice and resignation. Just as heat is an important factor in the process of creation, so is pain an essential reagent in the formation of man's life. It melts the intractable hardness of his spirit, and wears away the unyielding crust which confines his heart. But the Upanishat enjoins renunciation, not by way

of acceptance of pain, but for the purpose of enjoyment of truth. Such renunciation means an expansion into the Universal, a union with the Supreme. It is the renunciation of the cocoon for the freedom of the living wings. So that the ideal hermitage of ancient India was not a theatre where the spirit should wrestle with the flesh, or where the monastic order should try conclusions with the social order,—it was to establish a harmony between all our energies and the eternal reality. That is why the relations of Indian humanity with beast and bird and tree had attained an intimacy which may seem strange to people of other lands. Our poets have told us that the *tapovana* is *shantarasaspadam*,—that the emotional quality peculiar to the forest-retreat is Peace, the peace which is the emotional counterpart of perfection. Just as the mingling of the colours of the spectrum gives us white light, so when the faculties of our mind, instead of being scattered, flow in a united stream, in harmony with the universal purpose, then does peace result—the peace which pervaded India's forest retreats, where man was not separate from, and had no quarrel with, the rest of his surroundings.

The two hermitages, which we have in the drama of Shakuntala, serve to give a magnitude to her joy and sorrow. One of these hermitages was on earth, the other on the border of the abode of immortals. In the first, we see the daughter of the hermitage watching in delight the union of the sweet flowering creeper with the mango tree round which it has twined; or busy rearing motherless young deer with handfuls of grass-seed, and picking the spear-grass out from their tender mouths, soothing the pricks with healing oil. This hermitage serves to make simple, natural and beautiful the love of the king for the hermit girl. The other hermitage was on the great cloud-like massive Hemakuta peak, standing like Shiva, with his locks of forest-growths and tangled creepers, lost in meditation, its gaze fixed on the sun. In this, Marichi, the revered preceptor of both Gods and Titans, together with his wife, was engaged in the pursuit of self-realization. There, when the young hermit boys would playfully snatch from the lioness her suckling cub, its distress would greatly exercise the tāpasa Mother. The second hermitage, in turn, serves to mellow with a great peace and purity the sorrow and insult which had driven Shakuntala there.

It has to be realized, that the former is of the earth, the region of the mortals, the latter of heaven, the region of the immortals. In other words, the one represents, 'what is,' the other 'what should be.' The unceasing movement of 'what is' is towards 'what should be.' It finds its true freedom in that movement. The first is Sati—the Real—the last Shiva, the Good. In the life of Shakuntala, likewise, the 'what is' had to find its fulfilment in the 'what should be.' What was of the earth had to come, through the path of sorrow, to the border of heaven.

Those who have followed the evolution of the principal idea in this drama,—its seed-life in the soil of passion, its deliverance of harvest in the sunlight of the purity of self-abnegation,—will understand the great poet Goethe's criticism of Shakuntala, so tersely expressed in a single verse:—

Wouldst thou the flower of the spiring and fruit of the mature year,
Wouldst thou what charms and enraptures and what feeds and nourishes,
Wouldst thou heaven and earth in one name entwined,
I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all is said.

For in Shakuntala the reconciliation is given, through the penance of pain and sacrifice, to the pair of contraries, that which attracts and that which gives freedom, the limitation of self and the dedication of self to the Eternal. Goethe's own drama Faust, in its first and in its second part, tries to show the same separation and then reconciliation between the Real and the Good, between Sati and Shiva.

However, my point is this, that the scene of such reconciliation is depicted, both in Shakuntala and in Kumara-Sambhava, upon the background of the *tapovana*, showing whence the spring of the ideal harmony welled forth, the harmony between Nature and man, between the life in the individual and life in the All.

In the Ramayana, Rama and his companions, in their banishment, had to traverse forest after forest; they had to live in leaf-thatched huts,, to sleep on the bare ground. But as their hearts felt their kinship with woodland, hill and stream, they were not in exile amidst these. Poets, brought up in an atmosphere of different ideals, would have taken this opportunity of depicting in dismal colours the hardship of the forest-life in order to bring out the martyrdom of Ramachandra in the strong emphasis of contrast. But, in the Ramayana, we are led to realize the greatness of the hero, not in an inimical struggle with nature, but in sympathy with it.

Sita, the daughter-in-law of a great kingly house, goes along the forest paths.

एकैकं पादपं गुल्मं लतां वा पुष्पशालिनीम्
अदृष्ठरूपां पश्यन्ती राम पप्रच्छ सावला।
रमणीयान् बहुविधान् पादपान् कुसुमोत्करान्
सीतावचनसरब्ध आनयामास लक्ष्मण।
विचित्रवालुकाजलां हंससारसनादिताम्
रेमे जनकराजस्य सुता प्रेक्षा तदा नदीम्।।

She asks Rama about the flowering trees and shrubs and creepers which she has not seen before. At her request, Lakshmana gathers and brings her plants of all kinds exuberant with flowers, and it delights her heart to see the forest rivers, variegated with their streams and sandy bank, resounding with the calls of heron and duck.

सुरभ्यमासाद्य तु चित्रकूटम्
मदीञ्च तां मालयवती सुतीर्थाम्
ननन्द दृष्टो मृगपक्षिजुष्टाम्
अहो च दु.खं पुरविप्रवासात्।।

When Rama first took his abode in the Chitrakuta peak, that delightful *Chitrakuta*, by the *Malyavati* river, with its easy slopes for landing, he forgot all the pain of leaving his home in the capital at the sight of these woodlands, alive with beast and bird.

दीर्घकालोषितस्तस्मिनौ गिरी गिरिवनप्रिय: having lived on that hill for long, Rama, who was गरिवनप्रिय, lover of the mountain and the forest, said one day to Sita:

> न राजामंशमं भद्रे न कुचदिभर्विनाभव:
> मनो मे बाधते दष्टा रमणीयमिमं गिरिम्
>
> When I look upon the beauties of this hill, the loss of my kingdom troubles me no longer, no does the separation from my friends cause me any pang.

When they went over to the Dandaka forest, they saw there a hermitage with a halo round it caused by the sacrificial fires blazing like the sun itself. This ashram was शरण्यम् सर्व्वभूतानाम्' the refuge of all creatures; it was enfolded by *Brahmi Lakshmi*, the Spirit of the Infinite.

Thus passed Ramachandra's exile, now in woodland, now in hermitage scenes. The love which Rama and Sita bore each other united them, not only to each other, but to the Universe of life. That is why, when Sita was taken away, the loss seemed to be very great to the forest itself. The extinction of a star is doubtless a mighty event in the world of stars; and we would know, if we had pure vision, that any infliction of injury in the heart of a true lover gives rise to suffering which belongs to all the world. Sita's abduction robbed the forest of the most beautiful of its blossoms, the ineffable tenderness of human love,—that which imparted the mystery of a spiritual depth to all its sounds and forms.

Strangely enough, in Shakespeare's dramas, like those of Kalidasa, we find a secret vein of complaint against the artificial life of the king's court, the life of urgrateful treachery and falsehood. And almost everywhere, in his dramas, forest scenes have been introduced in connection with some working of the life of unscrupulous ambition. It is perfectly obvious in 'Timon of Athens'—but there Nature offers no message or balm to the injured soul of man. In 'Cymbeline' the mountainous forest and the cave appear in their aspect of obstruction to life's opportunities—which only seem tolerable in comparison with the vicissitudes of fortune in the artificial court life, as expressed by Belarius:

> 'Did you but know the city's usuries,
> And felt them knowingly: the art o the court,
> As hard to leave as keep; whose top to climb
> Is certain falling, or so slippery that
> The fear's as bad as falling:'

In 'As You Like It' the Forest of Arden is didactic in its lessons,—It does not bring peace, but it preaches when it says:

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?

In the 'Tempest' in Prospero's treatment of Ariel and Caliban we realize man's struggle with nature and his longing to sever connection with her. In 'Macbeth,' as a prelude to a bloody crime of treachery and treason, we are introduced to a scene of barren heath where the three witches appear as the personification of Nature's malignant forces; and in 'King Lear,' it is the fury of a father's love turned into curses by the ingratitude born of the unnatural life of the court, that finds its symbol in the storm in the heath. The extreme tragic intensity of 'Hamlet' and 'Othello' is unrelieved by any touch of Nature's eternity. Excepting in a passing glimpse of a moonlight night in the love scene in the 'Merchant of Venice' Nature has not been allowed in other dramas of this series, including 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Antony and Cleopatra,' to contribute her own music to the music of man's love. In 'The Winter's Tale' the suspicious cruelty of a king's love stands bare in its relentlessness, and Nature cowers before it offering no consolation. I hope it is needless for me to say that these observations of mine are not for criticizing Shakespeare's great power as a dramatic poet, but to show in his works the gulf between nature and human nature owing to the tradition of his race and time. It cannot be said that beauty of nature is ignored in his writings; only he fails to recognize in them the truth of the interpenetration of human life and the cosmic life of the world. When literature takes for its object the exhibition of the explosiveness of a human passion, then necessarily that passion is made detached from its great context of the universe and is shown in its extreme violence generated by the instability of equilibrium. And this is what we find in Elizabethan dramas,—the clash of passions in their fury of self-assertion. We observe a sudden and a completely different attitude of mind in the later English poets, like Wordsworth and Shelley, which can only be attributed to the great mental change in Europe, at that particular period, through the influence of the newly-discovered philosophy of India which stirred the soul of Germany and strongly roused the attention of other Western countries.

In Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' the very subject,—Man dwelling in the garden of Paradise,—seems to afford a special opportunity for bringing out the true greatness of man's relationship with Nature. But though the poet has described to us the beauties of the garden, though he has shown us the animals living there in amity and peace among themselves, there is no reality of kinship between them and man. They were created for man's enjoyment; man was their lord and master. We find no trace of the love of the first man and woman surpassing themselves and over-flowing the rest of creation, such as we find in the love scenes in *Kumara-Sambhava* and *Shakuntala* and in our Vaishnava lyrics, where love finds its symbols in the beauty of all natural objects. But in the seclusion of the bower, where the first man and woman rested in the garden of paradise,

Bird, beast, insect or worm
Durst enter none, such was their awe of man.

At the bottom of this gulf between man and Nature there is the lack of the message,—ईशावास्यमिदम् सर्व्वम् 'know all that is, as enveloped by God'. According to this epic of the West, God remains aloof to receive glorification from his creatures. The same idea persists in the case of man's relation to the rest of creation.

Not that India denied the superiority of man, but the test of that superiority lies, according to her, in the comprehensiveness of sympathy,—not in the aloofness of absolute distinction.

The love of Rama and Sita, in the *Uttara Rama Charita* has permeated the surrounding earth, water and sky with its exuberance. When Rama, for the second time, finds himself on the banks of The Godavari, he exclaims. यत्र द्रुमा अपि मृगा अपि बान्धवो मे 'this is the place even whose deer and whose trees are my friends'. When after Sita's exile he comes across some former haunt of theirs, he laments that his heart, even though turned to stone, melts when he sees the trees and the deer and the birds which Sita's own hands used to nourish with water, seed and grass.

In the *Meghaduta*, the exiled Yaksha is not shut up within himself in his grief. The very agony of his separation from his loved one serves to scatter his heart over the woods and streams, enriched by the prodigality of the rains. And so the casual longing of a love-sick individual has become part of the symphony of the universe. And this is the outcome of the spirit of teaching which springs from the ancient forest.

India holds sacred, and counts as places of pilgrimage, all spots which display a special beauty or splendour of nature. These had no original attraction, or account of any special fitness to be cultivated, or lived upon. Here, man is free, not to look upon nature as a source of supply of his necessities but to realize his soul beyond himself. The Himalayas of India are sacred and the Vindhya Hills. Her majestic rivers are sacred. Like Manasa and the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna are sacred. India has saturated with her love and worship the great nature with which her children are surround, whose light fills their eyes with gladness, whose water cleanses them, whose food gives them life, and from whose majestic mystery come forth constant messages of the infinite in music, scent, and colour, bringing awakening to their souls. India has gained the world through worship,—through communion of soul. And this is her heritage from her forest sanctuary.

Learning does not depend on the school alone. Much more does it depend upon the receptive mind of the pupil. There are scholars who win diplomas, but fail to learn. So do many of us frequent-places of pilgrimage, but come away from the door of the invisible shrine, where dwells the Eternal spirit of the place. They imagine that the mere journey to a place held sacred is sanctifying, that some peculiar virtues reside in particular soils and waters. Their minds do not shrink at the unspeakable pollution of the water and the

air of those places, the pollution to which they themselves contribute, and the moral filth which they allow to accumulate there. The salutation of worship to the all-pervading divinity in the fire, water and plants, in all creation, has been bequeathed to us by our ancestors in the following immortal verse:

> यो देवोऽग्नो योऽप्सु यो विश्वम् भुवनमाविवेश
> य ओषधिषु यो वनस्पतिषु तस्मै देवाय नमो नमः।

But we seem to have forgotten that all worship has also its duty of service, and in order truly to realize and approach the divine presence in the water and the air we have reverently to keep them clean and pure and healthful. The more our country has lost its powers of soul, the more elaborate have become its outward practices. The inner illumination of consciousness which is not only the object, but also the means of all true worship has, in our case, given place to the grossness of the senses and deadness of mere repetition of habits. But, even in these days of our spiritual sluggishness, I am unwilling to accept these mechanical practices as a permanent feature of India. It is absurd to believe as well-founded the idea, that a bath in a particular stream procures for the bather and millions of his ancestors a more favourable circumstance and desirable accommodation in the after life. Nor am I able to respect such a belief as something admirable. But my reverence goes out to the man, who when taking an immersion, can receive the water upon his body, and into his mind as well, in a devout spirit;—for him the grimy touch of habit has not been able to tarnish the ever-lasting mystery which is in fire and earth, water and food; he has overcome, by the sensitiveness of his soul, the gross materialism,—the spirit of contempt, of the average man, which impels the latter to look upon water as mere liquid matter.

So long as man was unable to realize an all-pervading law in the material world, his knowledge remained petty and unfruitful. But the modern man feels himself united to the universe by physical laws governing all. This is Science's great achievement.

The quest which India set to herself was to realize the same unity in the realm of the spirit, that is to say, in its completeness. Such union enables us to see Him in all who is above all else. And the wisdom, which grew up in the quiet of the forest shade, came out of the realization of this Greater-than-all in the heart of the all.

Let no one think that I desire to extol this achievement, as the one and the only consummation. I would rather insist on the inexhaustible variety of the human race, which does not grow straight up, like a palmyra tree, on a single stem, but like a banian tree spreads itself in ever-new trunks and branches. Man's history is organic, and deep-seated life-forces work towards its growth. It is hopeless to cater to some clamorous demand of the moment, by endeavouring to fashion the history of one people on the model of another,—however flourishing the latter may be. A small foot may be the sign of aristocratic descent, but the Chinese woman's artificial attempt has only resulted in cramped feet. For India to force herself along European lines of

;rowth would not make her Europe, but only a distorted India.

That is why we must be careful to-day to try to find out the principles, by neans of which India will be able for certain to realize herself. That principle ; neither commercialism, nor nationalism. It is universalism. It is not merely elf-determination, but self-conquest and self-dedication. This was recognized nd followed in India's forests of old; its truth was declared in the Upanishat nd expounded in the Gita; the Lord Buddha renounced the world that he ıight make this truth a household word for all mankind; Kabir, Nanak and ther great spirits of India continued to proclaim its message. India's grand chievement, which is still stored deep within her heart, is waiting, to unite ithin itself Hindu, Moslem, Buddhist, and Christian, not by force, not by the pathy of resignation, but in the harmony of active co-operation.

An almost impossible task has been set to India by her Providence, a task iven to no other great countries in the world. Among her children and her uests differences in race and language, religion and social ideals are as umerous as great, and she has to achieve the difficult unity which has to be ue in spite of the separateness that is real. The best and the greatest of her ons have called us in immortal words to realize the unity of souls in all human eings and thus fulfil the highest mission of our history; but we have merely layed with their words, and we have rigidly kept apart man from man, and lass from class, setting up permanent barriers of indignity between them. We emained unconscious of the suicidal consequence of such divisions, so long s we lay stationary in the torpor of centuries, but when the alien world ıddenly broke upon our sleep and dragged us on in its impetus of movement, ur disjointed heterogeneity set up in its lumbering unwieldiness an internal ash and crush and unrhythmic stagger which is both ludicrous and tragic at ıe same moment. So long as we disregard or misread the message of our ıcient forest, the message of all-pervading truth in humanity, the message of l-comprehensive union of souls which rises above all differences and goes eeper than mere expediency, we shall have to go on suffering sorrow after rrow and endless humiliation, and in all things futility.

1919

CONSTRUCTION VERSUS CREATION

CONSTRUCTION IS FOR a purpose, it expresses our wants; but creation is for itself, it expresses our very being. We make a vessel because water has to be fetched. It must answer the question why. But when we take infinite trouble to give it a beautiful form, no reason has to be assigned. It is something which is ultimate; it is for the realization of our own spirit which is free, which is glad. If, in the works of our life, needs make themselves too domineering, purposes too obtrusive, if something of our complete humanity is not expressed at the same time, then these works become ugly and unspiritual.

In love, in goodness, man himself is revealed; these express no want in him; they show the fulness of his nature which flows out of himself and therefore they are purely creative. They are ultimate—therefore, in our judgment of man's civilization, they give us the true criterion of perfection.

Creation is the revelation of truth through the rhythm of forms. It has a dualism consisting of the expression and the material. Of these two wedded companions the material must keep in the background and continually offer itself as a sacrifice to its absolute loyalty to the expression. And this is true of all things, whether in our individual life or in our society.

When the material makes itself too aggressive and furiously multiplies itself into unmeaning voluminousness, then the harmony of creation is disturbed and truth is obscured. If the lamp takes a perverse pride in displaying its oil, then the light remains unrevealed. The material must know that it has no idea of completeness in itself, that it must not hold out temptations to decoy men under its destination away from their creative activities.

The laws of grammar are necessary for the construction of a poem, but the readers must not be made conscious of their constant dictatorship. In classical India we have a Sanskrit poem in which all the complex grammatical rules are deliberately illustrated. This gives continual shocks of delight to a class of readers who, even in a work of art, seek some tangible proof of power almost physical in its manifestation. This proves that by special cultivation a kind of mentality can be produced which is strangely capable of taking delight in contemplating the mere spectacle of power manipulating materials, forgetting that materials are not the truth. And these people of an athletic habit of mind encourage artists to sacrifice art to the vanity of performance, simplicity of truth to the antics of cleverness.

What is the truth of the world? Its truth is not the mass of materials, but their universal relatedness. A drop of water is not a particular assortment of elements, it is their mutuality. In fact matter, as a mass, is an abstraction to us; we know it by a betrayal of secret through science. We do not directly perceive it. We see a flower, but not matter. Matter in a laboratory has its use but no expression. This expression alone is creation; it is an end in itself. So also does

our civilization find its completeness when it expresses humanity, not when it displays its power to amass materials.

I have said that the truth of this world is in its law of relatedness, that is to say, the law of keeping step together. For the world is a movement, and this movement must not be retarded in any of its parts by a break of cadence. The world of men is suffering the agony of pain, because its movements are not in harmony with one another, because the relationship of races has not yet been established in a balance of beauty and goodness. This balance cannot be maintained by external regulation. It is a dance which must have music to regulate it. This great music is lacking in the historical meeting of man which has taken place in the present age, and all its movements in their discongruity are creating complexities of pain.

We know of an instance in our own history of India when a great personality[1] struck up in his life and voice the key-note of the solemn music of man-love for all creatures. And that music crossed the sea and the mountain and the desert, and races belonging to different climes and habits and languages were drawn together, not in a clash of arms or in the conflict of exploitation but in co-operation of life, in amity and peace. This was a creation. The great rhythm of this symphony was in the very heart of the world. This rhythm is what metre is to a poem, not a mere enclosure for keeping ideas from running off in disorder, but a vitalizing force, making them indivisible in a unity of creation.

When humanity lacks this music of soul, then society becomes a mechanical arrangement of compartments, of political and social classifications. Such a machine is a mere aping of creation, and not having unity at its heart it enforces it in its outer structure for mere convenience. In it the life that grows and feels is hurt, and either is crushed into insensibility or breaks out in constant convulsions.

The vital harmony is lacking to-day in unity of man, for the formalness of law and regulation has displaced the living ideal of personality from human affairs, and science has taken the office of religion in man's greatest creative work, his civilization.

The diversion of man's energy to the outside is producing an enormous quantity of materials which may give rise in us to the pride of power but not the joy of life. The hugeness of things is every day overaweing the greatness of man, and the gap between matter and life is growing wider. For when things become too many, they refuse to be completely assimilated to life, thus becoming its most dangerous rival, as is an excessively large pile of fuel to the fire.

Expression belongs to a different plane from that of its material. Our physical body has its elaborate mechanism for its various vital needs. Yet the wholeness of our body, where it is an expression, where it is one with our personality, is absolutely different in its aspect and meaning from the muscular, vascular or nervous system, and it keeps its veil strictly drawn. The

[1] Gautama Buddha.

physiological mechanism as an organ of efficiency carefully exacts from its means and methods their full equivalents in results. But the body is more than this mechanism, it is divine. An exhaustive list of all its functions fails to give us its definiteness. It is a creation and not a mere construction, rising far above its purposes and composition. Creation is infinitely in excess of all measurements, it is the immaterial in matter.

In all art every display of power is vulgar, and a true artist is humble in his creation. He despises making a show of material in his work and a parade of the difficulties of its process. For the power which accumulates things and manipulates them is fundamentally different from the power which transmutes them into the perfection of a creative unity.

And God is humble in His creation. He does not keep His muscles bared, nor does He go out of His way to attract our attention to His store of things or account-book of their cost. He gives out Himself in the abundance of His nature.

It is the final object of man to prove his similarity of nature with God by his fulness of truth, by his creativeness. Whatever he does solely in obedience to natural law, goaded by hunger or other compulsions, he feels at heart to be alien to his own nature. He somehow feels a shame about their evidence in his life and tries to put a cover over it, some cover fashioned by his own creative mind.

For instance, in his necessity for eating there is no difference between man and other creatures, yet he seems unwilling fully to acknowledge this and consequently tries to hide away the hunger element from his meals till it is almost lost to sight. He takes endless care to make his food ornamental and likewise the vessel out of which he takes it. And so, with regulations and designs of his own make, he sets up an elaborate pretension that he is not busy satisfying any legitimate need of the physiological nature.

This is the process by which the unnecessary has assumed an enormously greater proportion than the necessary in our civilization. In its own turn it begets the danger of burdening us with fixed necessities of habit which have not the sanction of nature nor that of our creative freedom but get merely piled up into a refuse heap of conventionality.

It may be said that as life is a growth it cannot have a completeness of expression and, therefore, its only true expression is vigour. As intensity of passion leading to a variety of emotional experiences, and adventures of mind giving rise to a wealth of power and production, constitute what they call living, vigour of feeling and intellect is no doubt a great asset of life. But life, merely taken as a force, is elemental, it is not human. It has its use like steam and electricity, but there is no ideal of perfection in it. Those who make such life an object of their worship lose all pity for the personal man and have no compunction in sacrificing individuals to their blind infatuation for power and experiences. And I repeat it once again that life can only become an end in itself when it is a creation, just as the elements that go to the composition of a flower are fulfilled only when they are a flower.

Growth there must be in life. But growth does not mean an enlargement through additions. Things, such as masonry-structure, which have to be constructed by a gradual building up of materials, do not show their perfection until they are completed. But living things start with their wholeness from the beginning of their growth. Life is a continual process of synthesis. A child is complete in itself; it does not wait for the perfection of its lovability till it has come to the end of its childhood. The enjoyment of a song begins from the beginning of the singing and continually follows its course to the end. But the man whose sole concern is the acquisition of power or material deals with a task which is cursed with eternal incompleteness. For things find no meaning in themselves when their magnitude consists solely of accumulated bulk. They acquire truth only when they are assimilated to a living idea. This assimilation becomes impossible so long as the passion for acquisition occupies all our mind, when there is no large leisure for life force to pursue its own great work of self-creation.

There was a time when commerce was restricted to a narrow circle in society, and was meek enough to acknowledge its limitations. In spite of its usefulness men treated it with condescension, even with disrespect. This was because man tried to maintain an imperious aloofness from all exacting needs, and, while accepting their services, he refused to do homage to them. I believe and hope that in the range of all literature and art there is no single instance of a monied man being glorified for the mere sake of his money. Our Laxmi[1] is not the goddness of the cash balance in the bank: she is the symbol of that ideal plenitude which is never dissociated from goodness and beauty.

But in recent centuries has come a devastating change in our mentality with regard to the acquisition of money. We not only pursue it but bend our knees to it. For us its call has become the loudest of all voices, reaching even the sanctuaries of our temples. That it should be allowed a sufficiently large place in society there can be no question, but it becomes an outrage when it occupies those seats which are specially reserved for the immortals, by bribing us, by tampering with our moral pride, by recruiting the best strength of society on its side in a traitor's campaign against human ideals, disguising with the help of pageantry and pomp its innate insignificance.

Such a state has come to pass because, with the help of science, the possibility of profit has suddenly become immoderate. The whole of human society throughout its length and breadth has felt the gravitational pull of a giant planet of greed with its concentric rings of innumerable satellites. It has carried to our society a distinct deviation from its moral orbit, its mental balance being upset and its aspirations brought down to the dust. This is why never before in our history have our best instincts and endeavours been so openly flouted as a sickness of a rickety sentimentalism. And what is becoming a constant source of disaster for humanity is the incessant hypnotism of money and its secret action upon the mind. It manufactures opinions, it navigates newspapers through tortuous channels of suppression of truth and exaggera-

[1] The Hindu goddess of abundance and fortune, wife of Vishnu.

tion, it pulls most of the strings of politics, it secretly maintains all kinds of slavery under all varieties of masks. In former times the intellectual and spiritual powers of this earth upheld their dignity of independence, but to-day, as in the fatal stage of disease, the influence of money has got into our brain and affected our heart.

Any impetuosity of passion that tends to overwhelm social equilibrium not only produces moral callousness but destroys our reverence for beauty. The truth of this was made evident to us when I set out from Calcutta on my voyage to Japan. The first thing that shocked me with a sense of personal injury was the sight of the ruthless intrusion of factories on both banks of the Ganges, where they are most unbecoming in their brazer-faced effrontery. The blow which it gave to me was owing to the precious memory of the days of my boyhood when the scenery of this river was the only great thing near my birthplace reminding me of the existence of a world made by God's own hands. You all know that Calcutta is an upstart town with no depth of sentiment in her face or in her manners. It may truly be said about its genesis, that in the beginning there was the spirit of the shop which uttered through its megaphone, 'Let there be the office,' and there was Calcutta. She brought with her no dowry of distinctions, no majesty of a noble or romantic origin. She never gathered round her any great historical associations, annals of brave sufferings or memory of mighty deeds done. The only thing which gave her the sacred baptism of beauty was the river, which carried the voice of the Genius of our race from an immortal past singing of its aspiration of the boundless. I was fortunate enough to be born before the smoke-belching Iron Dragon had devoured the greater part of the life on its banks; when the landing stairs descending into its water, caressed by its tide, appeared to me like the loving arms of the villages clinging to it.

I am afraid my complaint will evoke a feeling of pitying amusement in the minds of all sober people when these words reach them. To condemn the impairing of the beauty of a river bank and to overlook the substantial fact of the production of a prodigious quantity of gunny bags will sound too exquisitely unpractical to be able to cause any serious harm!

But as an instance of the contrast of the different ideal of a different age as incarnated in the form of a town, the memory of my last visit to Benares comes to my mind. What impressed me most deeply while I was there was the mother-call of the river Ganges which ever filled the atmosphere with an 'unheard melody,' attracting the whole population to its bosom every hour of the day. I am proud of the fact that India has felt a most profound love for this river which nourished her civilization on its banks, guiding its course from the majestic silence of the Himalayas to the sea with its myriad voices of solitude. This feeling of love is different in a great measure from the modern sentiment of patriotism. It is not too definitely associated with a particular geography or a limited series of political events. It represents the sub-conscious memory of a whole country, of her ages of endeavour after spiritual emancipation.

But what about our gunny bags? Sentiments are fine, but gunny bags are

indispensable. I admit it, and am willing to allow them a place in society (but in strictly modest moderation), if my opponent will only admit that even gunny bags should have their limits and acknowledge the full worth of man who needs leisure and space for his joy and worship. But if this concession to humanity be denied or curtailed, and if profit and production are allowed to run amuck, they play havoc with our love of beauty, of truth, of justice and with our love for our fellow-beings. That man is brave, that he is social, that he is religious, that he is the seeker of the unknown—these have some aspect of the complete in them; but that he is a manufacturer of gunny bags and other articles has not in itself any idea of an organic wholeness. Therefore utility should never forget its subordinate position in human affairs: it must not be permitted to occupy more than its legitimate place and powers in society, nor to have the liberty to desecrate the poetry of life, or to deaden our sensitiveness to ideals, bragging of our coarseness as a sign of virility and bespattering with the mud of mockery our spiritual nature. That would be like allowing a rugged boulder to sneer at and browbeat the living perfection of a flower.

We have our out-offices in the back yard of our houses. And because they disturb the unity of the idea which is our home, we keep a line of separateness between the outside help bought with money and services of kinship, between necessity and sentiment. But the home gives way to the office if the necessity becomes overwhelming. This has made our modern civilization all out-offices, to which home is an adjunct. Modern civilization has become Shudra[1] in its character.

For the name Shudra symbolizes one who is merely useful, in whom the man who is above usefulness is not recognized. The word Shudra denotes a classification which includes all named machines who have lost the decency of humanity, be their works manual of intellectual. They are like a walking stomach, or brain, and we feel, in pity, urged to call on God to make them into a man. When man adopted his ideals he did not give success a place of distinction; and even in war he held the ideal of honour above that of success. But success which is Shudra, and whose dwelling is in the office, has arrogantly come into the front. And if through its incessant touch of defilement we contract the ugly habit of deriding sentiments in favour of materials, then the slave dynasty will be confirmed for ever.

This is the root of the struggle of the present age. Man is refusing to accept for good his position as Shudra, and our civilization is feeling ashamed of the degradation imposed upon it by the lust of power and money.

In the old time when commerce was a member of the normal life of man, there ruled the spirit of Laxmi, who with her divine touch of humanity saved wealth from the unseemliness of rampant individualism, mean both in motive and method. Venice had very little that was deformed and discordant; Samarkand and Bokhara had in them the richness of human associations. We can imagine what Delhi and Agra must have been in the time to which they

[1] Servile caste whose duty is to serve the three higher castes according to the Hindu code of Manu.

belonged. They manifested in their development some creatively human aspect of a great empire. Whatever might have been its character, even in their decay they still retain their magnificence which was the true product of the self-respect of man.

Then think of Calcutta, which on one side has its squalid congeries of clerks clinging to the meagre and precarious livelihood short of all margin for beauty and joy accorded to them in a niggardly spirit of utilitarianism, and on the other its pompously formal rows of buildings sheltering a nomadic swarm of money-mongers—with no human link between them, with no common sharing of social amenities. This is the hideousness of modern commerce—it does not stimulate men into a healthy and normal activity of production but organizes and makes use of them by mixing and mangling their minds; it is shabbily parsimonious in all that is connected with human life and extravagant in all that tends to the multiplying of market wares.

I do not for a moment mean to imply that in any particular period of their history men were free from the disturbances of their lower passions. Selfishness ever had its share in their government and trade. Yet there was a struggle for maintaining a balance of forces in our society, and our passions with their rude strength cherished no delusions about their own rank and value, and contrived no clever devices to hoodwink our moral nature. For in those days our intellect was not so tempted to put its weight into the balance on the side of over-greed.

But now our passion for power and money has no equal in the field. It has not only science for its ally, but also other forces that have some semblance of religion, such as nation-worship and the idealizing of self-interest.

Science is producing a habit of mind which is ever weakening in us this spiritual standpoint of truth that has its foundation in our sense of a person as the ultimate and innermost reality of existence. Science has its true sphere in analysing this world as a construction just as a grammarian has his legitimate mission in analysing the syntax of a poem. But the world as a creation is not a construction; it is also more than its syntax. It is a poem, which we are apt to forget when, by exclusive attention, grammar takes complete possession of our mind.

Upon the loss of the sense of religion, the reign of the machine and of method has been firmly established. It is the simplification of man by jettisoning a great part of his treasure; spiritually speaking, he has been made a homeless tramp, getting a freedom which is negative because superficial. Its concentrated hurt had been felt by all the world in the late war. Freed from the bond of spiritual relationship as the medium of the brotherhood of man, the different sections of society are continually being resolved into their elemental character of forces. Labour is a force, and also capital; so are the Government and the people, the man and the woman. It is said that when the forces lying latent even in a handful of dust are liberated from their bond of unity, which is their bond of creation, they can lift St. Paul's Cathedral to the height of a mountain. Such disfranchised forces roving as irresponsible

freebooters may be useful to us for certain purposes, but St. Paul's Cathedral is, generally speaking, better for us standing secure on its foundation than shattered into pieces and scattered in the void. To own the secret of mastering these forces is a proud fact for us, but the power of self-control and self-sacrifice within is a truer subject of exultation for mankind. The genii of the *Arabian Nights* may have their lure and fascination for us, but God is infinitely more precious for imparting to our society its spiritual power of creation. But these genii are abroad everywhere; and even after their death-dance in the late war, incantations addressed to them are secretly being muttered, and their red-robed devotees are still getting ready to play tricks upon humanity by suddenly spiriting it away to some hill-top of desolation. The thunder-clouds of revolution which are ominously gathering and flashing their angry teeth and growling, are the outcome of a long process of separation of human personality from human power, reducing man into a ghost of abstraction.

Modern science has outwardly brought all mankind close together. The situation requires the spiritual realization of some great truth of relationship to save human societies from constant conflict of interest and friction of pride. The people who are mere forces, when not organically united, must prove their humanity by some creative transfusion. This is not a mere problem of construction, and therefore does not chiefly fall within the province of science, which deals merely with discovery and invention and not with creation. The outer bonds of telegraph wires and railway lines have helped men all the more efficiently to tear one another to pieces and to rob their weaker fellow-beings of food, of freedom, and of self-respect. Must the sword continue to rule for ever and not the sceptre, and must science after her great achievement of mastering the geography of the earth remain at the head of the administration? Can she establish peace and unity in this world of diverse races? Has it not been sufficiently proved that her material law of ruthless skilfulness can only commandeer the genii of power for her agents but cannot conjure up that spirit of creation which is the love of God and man? And yet science does not show any sign of vacating her seat in favour of humanity or submit to any curtailment of her jurisdiction after her own proper work has been finished. The powerful races who have the scientific mind and method and machinery have taken upon themselves the immense responsibility of the present age. We complain not of their law and government, which are scientifically efficient, but of the desolating deadliness of their machine domination. These people in their dealings with subject races all over the world forget that science and law are not a perfect medium for human communication. They refuse to acknowledge what an ordeal it can be for human beings meekly to have to receive gifts from animated pigeon-holes or condescension from a steam-engine of the latest type. We feel the withering fierceness of the spirit of modern civilization all the more because it beats directly against our human sensibility; and it is we of the Eastern hemisphere who have the right to say that those who represent this great age of great opportunities are furiously building their doom by their renouncement of the

divine ideal of personality; for the ultimate truth in man is not in his intellect or in his material wealth; it is in his imagination of sympathy, in his illumination of heart, in his activities of self-sacrifice, in his capacity for extending love far and wide across all barriers of caste and colour, in his realizing this world not as a storehouse of mechanical power but as a habitation of man's soul with its eternal music of beauty and its inner light of a divine presence.

1920

A CRY FOR PEACE

THE WORLD IS crying for peace. The West is desiring the restoration of peace through a League of Powers. But can Powers find their equilibrium in themselves? Power cannot be made secure only against power, it must also be made secure against the weak; for there lies the peril of its losing balance. The weak are as great a danger for the strong, as quicksands for an elephant. They do not assist progress, because they do not resist, they only drag down. The people who grow accustomed to wield absolute power over others are apt to forget, that by doing it they generate an unseen disruptive force, which some day rends that power into pieces. The dumb fury of the down-trodden finds its awful support from the universal law of moral balance. The air which is thin and weak gives birth to storms that nothing can resist. This has been proved in history over and over again; and stormy forces arising from the heart of insulted humanity are openly gathering in the air even in the present day. Yet the psychology of athletic might stubbornly refuses its lessons and despises to take count of the terribleness of the weak. This is the gross stupidity, that, like an unsuspected worm, burrows at the bottom of the muscular bulk of the prosperous and the proud. Have we never read of the gorgeousness of a power, supinely secure in its arrogance, in a moment dissolving in the air at the explosion of the outraged weak? Politicians calculate upon the number of mailed hands that are on the sword-hilts; they do not possess the third eye to see the great invisible hand, that clasps in silence the hand of the helpless and waits its time. The strong form their League by combination of Powers, driving the weak to form their league alone with their God. I know I am crying in the wilderness, when I raise my voice of warning; and while the West is busy in its organization for building its machine-made peace, it will still continue to nourish, with its iniquities, underground forces of earthquake in the vast bosom of the Eastern Continent. The West seems unconscious that Science, by providing it with more and more power, is tempting it to suicide, encouraging it to accept the challenge of the disarmed, not knowing that this challenge comes from a higher source.

Two prophecies about the world's salvation are cherished in the hearts of the two great religions of the world. They represent the highest expectation of man, thereby indicating his faith in a truth, which he instinctively considers as ultimate,—the truth of love. These prophecies have not for their vision the fettering of the world into tameness with a closely linked power forged in the factory of a political steel trust. One of these religions has, for its meditation, the image of Buddha who is to come, Maitreya, the Buddha of love. And he is to bring peace. The other religion waits for the coming of Christ. For Christ preached peace when he preached love, when he preached Oneness of the Father among brothers who are many. And this was the truth of peace. Christ never held that peace was the best policy. For policy is not truth. The calculation of self-interest can never successfully fight the irrational force of

passion—the passion which is perversion of love, and which can only be set aright by the truth of love. So long as the Powers build a League on the foundation of their desire for safety, and for securest enjoyment of gains,—for consolidation of past injustice, for putting off reparation of wrongs, while their fingers still wriggle for grabbing and still reek of blood,—rifts will appear in their union, and conflicts in future will take greater force and magnitude. It is the national and commercial egoism, which is the evil harbinger of war; by different combinations it changes its shape and dimensions, but not its nature. This egoism is still held almost as sacred as religion; and such religion, by its mere change of temple and of committee of priests, will never save men. We must know that, as, through science and commerce, the realization of the unity of the material world gives us power, so the realization of the great spiritual unity of man only can give us peace.

1919

THE CALL OF TRUTH

PARASITES HAVE TO pay for their readymade victuals by losing the power of assimilating food in its natural form. In the history of man this same sin of laziness has always entailed degeneracy. Man becomes parasitical, not only when he fattens on others' toil, but also when he becomes rooted to a particular set of outside conditions and allows himself helplessly to drift along the stream of things as they are; for the outside is alien to the inner self, and if the former be made indispensable by sheer habit, man acquires parasitical characteristics, and becomes unable to perform his true function of converting the impossible into the possible.

In this sense all the lower animals are parasites. They are carried along by their environment; they live or die by natural selection; they progress or retrogress as nature may dictate. Their mind has lost the power of growth. The bees, for millions of years, have been unable to get beyond the pattern of their hive. For that reason, the form of their cell has attained a certain perfection, but their mentality is confined to the age-long habits of their hive-life and cannot soar out of its limitations. Nature has developed a cautious timidity in the case of her lower types of life; she keeps them tied to her apron strings and has stunted their minds, lest they should stray into dangerous experiments.

But Providence displayed a sudden accession of creative courage when it came to man; for his inner nature has not been tied down, though outwardly the poor human creature has been left naked, weak and defenceless. In spite of these disabilities, man in the joy of his inward freedom has stood up and declared; 'I shall achieve the impossible.' That is to say, he has consistently refused to submit to the rule of things as they always have been, but is determined to bring about happenings that have never been before. So when, in the beginning of his history, man's lot was thrown in with monstrous creatures, tusked and taloned, he did not, like the deer, simply take refuge in flight, nor, like the tortoise, take refuge in hiding, but set to work with flints to make even more efficient weapons. These, moreover, being the creation of his own inner faculties, were not dependent on natural selection, as were those of the other animals, for their development. And so man's instruments progressed from flint to steel. This shows that man's mind has never been helplessly attached to his environment. What came to his hand was brought under his thumb. Not content with the flint on the surface, he delved for the iron beneath. Not satisfied with the easier process of chipping flints, he proceeded to melt iron ore and hammer it into shape. That which resisted more stubbornly was converted into a better ally. Man's inner nature not only finds success in its activity, but there it also has its joy. He insists on penetrating further and further into the depths, from the obvious to the hidden, from the easy to the difficult, from parasitism to self-determination, from the slavery of his passions to the mastery of himself. That is how he has won.

But if any section of mankind should say, 'The flint was the weapon of our revered forefathers; by departing from it we destroy the spirit of the race,' then

they may succeed in preserving what they call their race, but they strike at the root of the glorious tradition of humanity which was theirs also. And we find that those, who have steadfastly stuck to their flints, may indeed have kept safe their pristine purity to their own satisfaction, but they have been outcasted by the rest of mankind, and so have to pass their lives slinking away in jungle and cave. They are, as I say, reduced to a parasitic dependence on outside nature, driven along blindfold by the force of things as they are. They have not achieved Swaraj in their inner nature, and so are deprived of Swaraj in the outside world as well. They have ceased to be even aware, that it is man's true function to make the impossible into the possible by dint of his own powers; that it is not for him to be confined merely to what has happened before; that he must progress towards what ought to be by rousing all his inner powers by means of the force of his soul.

Thirty years ago I used to edit the Sādhanā magazine, and there I tried to say this same thing. Then English-educated India was frightfully busy begging for its rights. And I repeatedly endeavoured to impress on my countrymen, that man is not under any necessity to beg for rights from others, but must create them for himself; because man lives mainly by his inner nature, and there he is the master. By dependence on acquisition from the outside, man's inner nature suffers loss. And it was my contention, that man is not so hard oppressed by being deprived of his outward rights as he is by the constant bearing of the burden of prayers and petitions.

Then, when the Bangadarshan magazine came into my hands, Bengal was beside herself at the sound of sharpening of the knives for her partition. The boycott of Manchester, which was the outcome of her distress, had raised the profits of the Bombay mill-owners to a super-foreign degree. And I had then to say, 'This will not do, either; for it is also of the outside. Your main motive is hatred of the foreigner, not love of country.' It was then really necessary for our countrymen to be made conscious of the distinction, that the Englishman's presence is an external accident,—mere *māyā*—but that the presence of our country is an internal fact which is also an eternal truth. *Māyā* looms with an exaggerated importance, only when we fix our attention exclusively upon it, by reason of some infatuation—be it of love, or of hate. Whether in our passion we rush to embrace it, or attack it; whether we yearn for it, or spurn it; it equally fills the whole field of our blood-shot vision.

Māyā is like the darkness. No steed, however swift, can carry us beyond it; no amount of water can wash it away. Truth is like a lamp; even as it is lit *māyā* vanishes. Our Shastras tell us that Truth, even when it is small, can rescue us from the terror which is great. Fear is the atheism of the heart. It cannot be overcome from the side of negation. If one of its heads be struck off, it breeds, like the monster of the fable, a hundred others. Truth is positive: it is the affirmation of the soul. If even a little of it be roused, it attacks negation at the very heart and overpowers it wholly.

Alien government in India is a veritable chameleon. Today it comes in the guise of the Englishman; to-morrow perhaps as some other foreigner; the

next day, without abating a jot of its virulence, it may take the shape of our own countrymen. However determinedly we may try to hunt this monster of foreign dependence with outside lethal weapons, it will always elude our pursuit by changing its skin, or its colour. But if we can gain within us the truth called our country, all outward *māyā* will vanish of itself. The declaration of faith that my country it there, to be realized, has to be attained by each one of us. The idea that our country is ours, merely because we have been born in it, can only be held by those who are fastened, in a parasitic existence, upon the outside world. But the true nature of man is his inner nature, with its inherent powers. Therefore that only can be a man's true country, which he can help to create by his wisdom and with his love and his actions. So in 1905, I called upon my countrymen to *create* their own country by putting forth their own powers from within. For the act of creation itself is the realization of truth.

The Creator gains Himself in His universe. To gain one's own country means to realize one's own soul more fully expanded within it. This can only be done when we are engaged in building it up with our service, our ideas and our activities. Man's country being the creation of his own inner nature, when his soul thus expands within it, it is more truly expressed, more fully realized. In my paper called 'Swadeshi Samaj', written in 1905, I discussed at length the ways and means by which we could make the country of our birth more fully our own. Whatever may have been the shortcomings of my words then uttered, I did not fail to lay emphasis on the truth, that we must win our country, not from some foreigner, but from our own inertia, our own indifference. Whatever be the nature of the boons we may be seeking for our country at the door of the foreign Government, the result is always the same,—it only makes our inertia more densely inert. Any public benefit done by the alien Government goes to their credit, not to ours. So whatever outside advantage such public benefit might mean for us, our country will only get more and more completely lost to us thereby. That is to say, we shall have to pay out in soul value for what we purchase as material advantage. The Rishi has said: 'Then son is dear, not because we desire a son, but because we desire to realize our own soul in him.' It is the same with our country. It is dear to us, because it is the expression of our own soul. When we realize this, it will become impossible for us to allow our service of our country to wait on the pleasure of others.

These truths, which I then tried to press on my countrymen, were not particularly new, nor was there anything therein which need have grated on their ears; but, whether anyone else remembers it or not, I at least am not likely to forget the storm of indignation which I roused. I am not merely referring to the hooligans of journalism whom it pays to be scurrilous. But even men of credit and courtesy were unable to speak of me in restrained language.

There were two root causes of this. One was anger, the second was greed.

Giving free vent to angry feelings is a species of self-indulgence. In those days there was practically nothing to stand in the way of the spirit of destructive revel, which spread all over the country. We went about picketing, burning, placing thorns in the path of those whose way was not ours, acknowledging no

restraints in language or behaviour,—all in the frenzy of our wrath. Shortly after it was all over, a Japanese friend asked me: 'How is it you people cannot carry on your work with calm and deep determination? This wasting of energy can hardly be of assistance to your object.' I had no help but to reply: 'When we have the gaining of the object clearly before our minds, we can be restrained, and concentrate our energies to serve it; but when it is a case of venting our anger, our excitement rises and rises till it drowns the object, and then we are spend-thrift to the point of bankruptcy.' However that may be, there were my countrymen encountering, for the time being, no check to the overflow of their outraged feelings. It was like a strange dream. Everything seemed possible. Then all of a sudden it was my misfortune to appear on the scene with my doubts and my attempts to divert the current into the path of self-determination. My only success was in diverting their wrath on to my own devoted head.

Then there was our greed. In history, all people have won valuable things by pursuing difficult paths. We had hit upon the device of getting them cheap, not even through the painful indignity of supplication with folded hands, but by proudly conducting our beggary in threatening tones. The country was in ecstasy at the ingenuity of the trick. It felt like being at a reduced price sale. Everything worth having in the political market was ticketed at half-price. Shabby-genteel mentality is so taken up with low prices that it has no attention to spare for quality, and feels inclined to attack anybody who has the hardihood to express doubts in that regard. It is like the man of worldly piety who believes that the judicious expenditure of coin can secure, by favour of the priest, a direct passage to heaven. The dare-devil who ventures to suggest that not heaven but dreamland is likely to be his destination must beware of a violent end.

Anyhow, it was the outside *māyā* I which was our dream and our ideal in those days. It was a favourite phrase of one of the leaders of the time that we must keep one hand at the feet and the other at the throat of the Englishman,—that is to say, with no hand left free for the country! We have since perhaps got rid of this ambiguous attitude. Now we have one party that has both hands raised to the foreigner's throat, and another party which has both hands down at his feet; but whichever attitude it may be, these methods still appertain to the outside *māyā*. Our unfortunate minds keep revolving round and round the British Government, now to the left, now to the right; our affirmations and denials alike are concerned with the foreigner.

In those days, the stimulus from every side, was directed towards the heart of Bengal. But emotion by itself, like fire, only consumes its fuel and reduces it to ashes; it has no creative power. The intellect of man must by itself, with patience, with skill, with foresight, in using this fire to melt that which is hard and difficult into the object of its desire. We neglected to rouse our intellectual forces, and so were unable to make use of this surging emotion of ours to create any organization of permanent value. The reason of our failure, therefore, was not in anything outside, but rather within us. For a long time past we have been in the habit, in our life and endeavour, of setting apart one

place for our emotions and another for our practices. Our intellect has all the time remained dormant, because we have not dared to allow it scope. That is why, when we have to rouse ourselves to action, it is our emotion which has to be requisitioned, and our intellect has to be kept from interfering by the hyponotism of some magical formula,—that is to say we hasten to create a situation absolutely inimical to the free play of our intellect.

The loss which is incurred by this continual deadening of our mind cannot be made good by any other contrivance. In our desperate attempts to do so we have to invoke the magic of *māyā* and our impotence jumps for joy at the prospect of getting hold of Aladin's lamp. Of course everyone has to admit that there is nothing to beat Aladin's lamp, its only inconvenience being that it beats one to get hold of. The unfortunate part of it is that the person, whose greed is great, but whose powers are feeble, and who has lost all confidence in his own intellect, simply will not allow himself to dwell on the difficulties of bespeaking the services of some of the lamp. He can only be brought to exert himself at all by holding out the speedy prospect of getting at the wonderful lamp. If any one attempts to point out the futility of his hopes, he fills the air with wailing and imprecation, as at a robber making away with his all.

In the heat of the enthusiasm of the partition days, a band of youths attempted to bring about the millennium through political revolution. Their offer of themselves as the first sacrifice to the fire which they had lighted makes not only their own country, but other countries as well, bare the head to them in reverence. Their physical failure shines forth as the effulgence of spiritual glory. In the midst of their supreme travail, they realized at length that the way of bloody revolution is not the true way; that where there is no politics, a political revolution is like taking a short cut to nothing; that the wrong way may appear shorter, but it does not reach the goal, and only grievously hurts the feet. The refusal to pay the full price for a thing leads to the loss of the price without the gain of the thing. These impetuous youths offered their lives as the price of their country's deliverance; to them it meant the loss of their all, but alas! the price offered on behalf of the country was insufficient. I feel sure that those of them who still survive must have realized by now, that the country must be the creation of all its people, not of one section alone. It must be the expression of all their forces of heart, mind and will.

The creation can only be the fruit of that *yoga*, which gives outward form to the inner faculties. Mere political or economical *yoga* is not enough; for that all the human powers must unite.

When we turn our gaze upon the history of other countries, the political steed comes prominently into view; on it seems to depend wholly the progress of the carriage. We forget that the carriage also must be in a fit condition to move; its wheels must be in agreement with one another and its parts well fitted together; with which not only have fire and hammer and chisel been busy but much thought and skill and energy have also been spent in the process. We have seen some countries which are externally free and independent; when, however, the political carriage is in motion, the noise which it

makes arouses the whole neighbourhood from slumber and the jolting produces aches and pains in the limbs of the helpless passengers. It comes to pieces in the middle of the road, and it takes the whole day to put it together again with the help of ropes and strings. Yet however loose the screws and however crooked the wheels, still it is a vehicle of some sort after all. But for such a thing as is our country,—a mere collection of jointed logs, that not only have no wholeness amongst themselves, but are contrary to one another,—for this, to be dragged along a few paces by the temporary pull of some common greed or anger, can never be called by the name of political progress. Therefore, is it not, in our case, wiser to keep for the moment our horse in the stable and begin to manufacture a real carriage?

From the writings of the young men, who have come back out of the valley of the shadow of death, I feel sure some such thoughts must have occurred to them. And so they must be realizing the necessity of the practice of *yoga* as of primary importance;—that form which is the union in a common endeavour of all the human faculties. This cannot be attained by any outside blind obedience, but only by the realization of self in the light of intellect. That which fails to illumine the intellect, and only keeps it in the obsession of some delusion, is its greatest obstacle.

The call to make the country our own by dint of our own creative power, is a great call. It is not merely inducing the people to take up some external mechanical exercise; for man's life is not in making cells of uniform pattern like the bee, nor in incessant weaving of webs like the spider; his greatest powers are within, and on these are his chief reliance. If by offering some allurement we can induce man to cease from thinking so that he may go on and on with some mechanical piece of world, this will only result in prolonging the sway of *Māyā*, under which our country has all along been languishing. So far, we have been content with surrendering our greatest right—the right to reason and to judge for ourselves—to the blind forces of shastric injunctions and social conventions. We have refused to cross the seas, because Manu has told us not to do so. We refuse to eat with the Mussulman, because prescribed usage is against it. In other words, we have systematically pursued a course of blind routine and habit, in which the mind of man has no place. We have thus been reduced to the helpless condition of the master who is altogether dependent on his servant. The real master, as I have said, is the internal man; and he gets into endless trouble, when he becomes his own servant's slave—a mere automaton, manufactured in the factory of servitude. He can then only rescue himself from one master by surrendering himself to another. Similarly, he who glorifies inertia by attributing to it a fanciful purity, becomes, like it, dependent on outside impulses, both for rest and motion. The inertness of mind, which is the basis of all slavery, cannot be got rid of by a docile submission to being hoodwinked, nor by going through the motions of a wound up mechanical doll.

The movement, which has now succeeded the Swadeshi agitation, is ever so much greater and has moreover extended its influence all over India.

Previously, the vision of our political leaders had never reached beyond the English-knowing classes, because the country meant for them only that bookish aspect of it which is to be found in the pages of the Englishman's history. Such a country was merely a mirage born of vapourings in the English language, in which flitted about thin shades of Burke and Gladstone, Mazzini and Garibaldi. Nothing resembling self-sacrifice or true feeling for their countrymen was visible. At this juncture, Mahatma Gandhi came and stood at the cottage door of the destitute millions, clad as one of themselves, and talking to them in their own language. Here was the truth at last, not a mere quotation out of a book. So the name of Mahatma, which was given to him, is his true name. Who else has felt so many men of India to be of his own flesh and blood? At the touch of Truth the pent-up forces of the soul are set free. As soon as true love stood at India's door, it flew open: all hesitation and holding back vanished. Truth awakened truth.

Stratagem in politics is a barren policy,—this was a lesson of which we were sorely in need. All honour to the Mahatma, who made visible to us the power of Truth. But reliance on tactics is so ingrained in the cowardly and the weak, that, in order to eradicate it, the very skin must be sloughed off. Even today, our wordly-wise men cannot get rid of the idea of utilizing the Mahatma as a secret and more ingenious move in their political gamble. With their minds corroded by untruth, they cannot understand what an important thing it is that the Mahatma's supreme love should have drawn forth the country's love. The thing that has happened is nothing less than the birth of freedom. It is the gain by the country of itself. In it there is no room for any thought, as to where the Englishman is, or is not. This love is self-expression. It is pure affirmation. It does not argue with negation; it has no need for argument.

Some notes of the music of this wonderful awakening of India by love, floated over to me across the seas. It was a great joy to me to think that the call of this festivity of awakening would come to each one of us; and that the true *shakti* of India's spirit, in all its multifarious variety, would at last find expression. This thought came to me because I have always believed that in such a way India would find its freedom. When Lord Buddha voiced forth the truth of compassion for all living creatures, which he had obtained as the fruit of his own self-discipline, the manhood of India was roused and poured itself forth in science and art and wealth of every kind. True, in the matter of political unification the repeated attempts that were then made as often failed; nevertheless India's mind had awakened into freedom from its submergence in sleep, and its overwhelming force would brook no confinement within the petty limits of country. It overflowed across ocean and desert, scattering its wealth of the spirit over every land that it touched. No commercial or military exploiter, to-day, has ever been able to do anything like it. Whatever land these exploiters have touched has been agonized with sorrow and insult, and the fair face of the world has been scarred and disfigured. Why? Because not greed but love is true. When love gives freedom it does so at the very centre of our life. When greed seeks unfettered power, it is forcefully impatient. We

saw this during the partition agitation. We then compelled the poor to make sacrifices, not always out of the inwardness of love, but often by outward pressure. That was because greed is always seeking for a particular result within a definite time. But the fruit which love seeks is not of to-day of tomorrow, nor for a time only: it is sufficient unto itself.

So, in the expectation of breathing the buoyant breezes of this new found freedom, I came home rejoicing. But what I found in Calcutta when I arrived depressed me. An oppressive atmosphere seemed to burden the land. Some outside compulsion seemed to be urging one and all to talk in the same strain, to work at the same mill. When I wanted to inquire, to discuss, my well-wishers clapped their hands over my lips, saying; Not now, not now. To-day, in the atmosphere of the country, there is a spirit of persecution, which is not that of armed force, but something, still more alarming, because it is invisible.' I found, further, that those who had their doubts as to the present activities, if they happened to whisper them out, however cautiously, however guardedly, felt some admonishing hand clutching them within. There was a newspaper which one day had the temerity to disapprove, in a feeble way, of the burning of cloth. The very next day the editor was shaken out of his balance by the agitation of his readers. How long would it take for the fire which was burning cloth to reduce his paper to ashes? The sight that met my eye was, on the one hand, people immensely busy; on the other, intensely afraid. What I heard on every side was, that reason, and culture as well, must be closured. It was only necessary to cling to an unquestioning obedience. Obedience to whom? To some *mantra*, some unreasoned creed!

And why this obedience? Here again comes that same greed, our spiritual enemy. There dangles before the country the bait of getting a thing of inestimable value, dirt cheap and in double-quick time. It is like the faqir with his goldmaking trick. With such a lure men cast so readily to the winds their independent judgment and wax so mightily wroth with those who will not do likewise. So easy is it to overpower, in the name of outside freedom, the inner freedom of man. The most deplorable part of it is that so many do not even honestly believe in the hope that they swear by. 'It will serve to make our countrymen, do what is necessary'—say they. Evidently, according to them, the India which once declared: 'In truth is Victory, not in untruth'—that India would not have been fit for *Swaraj*.

Another mischief is that the gain, with the promise of which obedience is claimed, is indicated by name, but is not defined. Just as when fear is vague it becomes all the more strong, so the vagueness of the lure makes it all the more tempting; inasmuch as ample room is left for each one's imagination to shape, it to his taste. Moreover there is no driving it into a corner because it can always shift from one shelter to another. In short, the object of the temptation has been magnified through its indefiniteness, while the time and method of its attainment have been made too narrowly definite. When the reason of man has been overcome in this way, he easily consents to give up all legitimate questions and blindly follows the path of obedience. But can we

really afford to forget so easily that delusion is at the root of all slavery—that all freedom means freedom from *māyā*? What if the bulk of our people have unquestioningly accepted the creed, that by means of sundry practices *swaraj* will come to them on a particular date in the near future, and are also ready to use their clubs to put down all further argument,—that is to say, they have surrendered the freedom of their own minds and are prepared to deprive other minds of their freedom likewise,—is not this by itself a reason for profound misgiving? We were seeking the exorciser to drive out this very ghost; but if the ghost itself comes in the guise of exorciser then the danger is only heightened.

The Mahatma has won the heart of India with his love; for that we have all acknowledged his sovereignty. He has given us a vision of the *shakti* of truth; for that our gratitude to him is unbounded. We read about truth in books: we talk about it: but it is indeed a red-letter day, when we see it face to face. Rare is the moment, in many a long year, when such good fortune happens. We can make and break Congresses every other day. It is at any time possible for us to stump the country preaching politics in English. But the golden rod which can awaken our country in Truth and Love is not a thing which can be manufactured by the nearest goldsmith. To the wielder of that rod our profound salutation! But if, having seen truth, our belief in it is not confirmed, what is the good of it all? Our mind must acknowledge the truth of the intellect, just as our heart does the truth of love. No Congress or other outside institution succeeded in touching the heart of India. It was roused only the touch of love. Having had such a clear vision of this wonderful power of Truth, are we to cease to believe in it, just where the attainment of *Swaraj* is concerned? Has the truth, which was needed in the process of awakenment, to be got rid of in the process of achievement?

Let me give an illustration. I am in search of a Vina player. I have tried East and I have tried West, but have not found the man of my quest. They are all experts, they can make the strings resound to a degree, they command high prices, but for all their wonderful execution they can strike no chord in my heart. At last I come across one whose very first notes melt away the sense of oppression within. In him is the fire of the *shakti* of joy which can light up all other hearts by its touch. His appeal to me is instant, and I hail him as Master. I then want a Vina made. For this, of course, are required all kinds of material and a different kind of science. If, finding me to be lacking in the means, my master should be moved to pity and say: 'Never mind, my son, do not go to the expense in workmanship and time which a Vina will require. Take rather this simple string tightened across a piece of wood and practise on it. In a short time you will find it to be as good as a Vina.' Would that do? I am afraid not. It would, in fact, be a mistaken kindness for the master thus to take pity on my circumstances. Far better if he were to tell me plainly that such things cannot be had cheaply. It is he who should teach me that merely one string will not serve for a true Vina; that the materials required are many and various; that the lines of its moulding must be shapely and precise; that if there be anything

faulty, it will fail to make good music, so that all laws of science and technique of art must be rigorously and intelligently followed. In short, the true function of the master player should be to evoke a response from the depths of our heart, so that we may gain the strength to wait and work till the true end is achieved.

From our master, the Mahatma,—may our devotion to him never grow less!—we must learn the truth of love in all its purity, but the science and art of building up *Swaraj* is a vast subject. Its pathways are difficult to traverse and take time. For this task, aspiration and emotion must be there, but no less must study and thought be there likewise. For it, the economist must think, the mechanic must labour, the educationist and statesman must teach and contrive. In a word, the mind of the country must exert itself in all directions. Above all, the spirit of Inquiry throughout the whole country, must be kept intact and untrammeled, its mind not made timid or inactive by compulsion, open or secret.

We know from past experience that it is not any and every call to which the Country responds. It is because no one has yet been able to unite in *Yoga* all the forces of the country in the work of its creation, that so much time has been lost over and over again. And we have been kept waiting and waiting for him who has the right and the power to make the call upon us. In the old forests of India, our *Gurus*, in the fulness of their vision of the Truth had sent forth such a call saying: 'As the rivers flow on their downward course, as the months flow on to the year, so let all seekers after truth come from all sides.' The initiation into Truth of that day has borne fruit, undying to this day, and the voice of its message still rings in the ears of the world.

Why should not our *Guru* of to-day, who would lead us on the paths of *Karma*, send forth such a call? Why should he not say: 'Come yet from all sides and be welcome. Let all the forces of the land he brought into action, for then alone shall the country awake. Freedom is in complete awakening, in full self-expression.' God has given the Mahatma the voice that can call, for in him there is the Truth. Why should this not be our long-awaited opportunity?

But his call came to one narrow field alone. To one and all he simply says: Spin and weave, spin and weave. Is this the call: 'Let all seekers after truth come from all sides'? Is this the call of the New Age to new creation? When nature called to the Bee to take refuge in the narrow life of the hive, millions of bees responded to it for the sake of efficiency, and accepted the loss of sex in consequence. But this sacrifice by way of self-atrophy led to the opposite of freedom. Any country, the people of which can agree to become neuters for the sake of some temptation, or command, carries within itself its own prison-house. To spin is easy, therefore for all men it is an imposition hard to bear. The call to the ease of mere efficiency is well enough for the Bee. The wealth of power, that is Man's can only become manifest when his utmost is claimed.

Sparta tried to gain strength by narrowing herself down to a particular purpose, but she did not win. Athens sought to attain perfection by opening herself out in all her fulness,—and she did win. Her flag of victory still flies at

the masthead of man's civilization. It is admitted that European military camps and factories are stunting man, that their greed is cutting man down to the measure of their own narrow purpose, that for these reasons joylessness darkly lowers over the West. But if man be stunted by big machines, the danger of his being stunted by small machines must not be lost sight of. The *charka* in its proper place can do no harm, but will rather do much good. But where, by reason of failure to acknowledge the differences in man's temperament, it is in the wrong place, there thread can only be spun at the cost of a great deal of the mind itself. Mind is no less valuable than cotton thread.

Some are objecting; 'We do not propose to curb our minds for ever, but only for a time.' But why should it be even for a time? Is it because within a short time spinning will give us Swaraj? But where is the argument for this? Swaraj is not concerned with our apparel only—it cannot be established on cheap clothing; its foundation is in the mind, which, with its diverse powers and its confidence in those powers, goes on all the time creating Swaraj for itself. In no country in the world is the building up of Swaraj completed. In some part or other of every nation, some lurking greed or illusion still perpetuates bondage. And the root of such bondage is always within the mind. Where then, I ask again, is the argument, that in our country Swaraj can be brought about by everyone engaging for a time in spinning? A mere statement, in lieu of argument, will surely never do. If once we consent to receive fate's oracle from human lips, that will add one more to the torments of our slavery, and not the least one either. If nothing but oracles will serve to move us, oracles will have to be manufactured, morning, noon and night, for the sake of urgent needs, and all other voices would be defeated. Those for whom authority is needed in place of reason, will invariably accept despotism in place of freedom. It is like cutting at the root of a tree while pouring water on the top. This is not a new thing, I know. We have enough of magic in the country,—magical revelation, magical healing, and all kinds of divine intervention in mundane affairs. That is exactly why I am so anxious to re-instate reason on its throne. As I have said before, God himself has given the mind sovereignty in the material world. And I say to-day, that only those will be able to get and keep Swaraj in the material world who have realized the dignity of self-reliance and self-mastery in the spiritual world, those whom no temptation, no delusion, can induce to surrender the dignity of intellect into the keeping of others.

Consider the burning of cloth, heaped up before the very eyes of our motherland shivering and ashamed in her nakedness. What is the nature of the call to do this? Is it not another instance of a magical formula? The question of using or refusing cloth of a particular manufacture belongs mainly to economic science. The discussion of the matter by our countrymen should have been in the language of economics. If the country has really come to such a habit of mind that precise thinking has become impossible for it, then our very first fight should be against such a fatal habit, to the temporary exclusion of all else if need be. Such a habit would clearly be the original sin from which all our ills are flowing. But far from this, we take the course of confirming

ourselves in it by relying on the magical formula that foreign cloth is 'impure'. Thus economics is bundled out and a fictitious moral dictum dragged into its place.

Untruth is impure in any circumstances, not merely because it may cause us material loss, but even when it does not; for it makes our inner nature unclean. This is a moral law and belongs to a higher plane. But if there be anything wrong in wearing a particular kind of cloth, that would be an offence against economics, or hygiene, or aesthetics, but certainly not against morality. Some urge that any mistake which brings sorrow to body or mind is a moral wrong. To which I reply that sorrow follows in the train of every mistake. A mistake in geometry may make a road too long, or a foundation weak, or a bridge dangerous. But mathematical mistakes cannot be cured by moral maxims. If a student makes a mistake in his geometry problem and his exercise book is torn up in consequence the problem will nevertheless remain unsolved until attacked by geometrical methods. But what if the schoolmaster comes to the conclusion that unless the exercise books are condemned and destroyed, his boys will never realize the folly of their mistakes? If such conclusion be well-founded, then I can only repeat that the reformation of such moral weakness of these particular boys should take precedence over all other lessons, otherwise there is no hope of their becoming men in the future.

The command to burn our foreign clothes has been laid on us. I, for one, am unable to obey it. Firstly, because I conceive it to be my very first duty to put up a valiant fight against this terrible habit of blindly obeying orders, and this fight can never be carried on by our people being driven from one injunction to another. Secondly, I feel that the clothes to be burnt are not mine, but belong to those who most sorely need them. If those who are going naked should have given us the mandate to burn, it would, at least, have been a case of self-immolation and the crime of incendiarism would not lie at our door. But how can we expiate the sin of the forcible destruction of clothes which might have gone to women whose nakedness is actually keeping them prisoners, unable to stir out of the privacy of their homes?

I have said repeatedly and must repeat once more that we cannot afford to lose our mind for the sake of any external gain. Where Mahatma Gandhi has declared war against the tyranny of the machine which is oppressing the whole world, we are all enrolled under his banner. But we must refuse to accept as our ally the illusion-haunted magic-ridden slave-mentality that is at the root of all the poverty and insult under which our country groans. Here is the enemy itself, on whose defeat alone Swaraj within and without can come to us.

The time, moreover, has arrived when we must think of one thing more, and that is this. The awakening of India is a part of the awakening of the world. The door of the New Age has been flung open at the trumpet blast of a great war. We have read in the Mahabharata how the day of self-revelation had to be preceded by a year of retirement. The same has happened in the world today. Nations had attained nearness to each other without being aware of it,

that is to say, the outside fact was there, but it had not penetrated into the mind. At the shock of the war, the truth of it stood revealed to mankind. The foundation of modern, that is Western, civilization was shaken; and it has become evident that the convulsion is neither local nor temporary, but has traversed the whole earth and will last until the shocks between man and man, which have extended from continent to continent, can be brought to rest, and a harmony be established.

From now onward, any nation which takes an isolated view of its own country will run counter to the spirit of the New Age, and know no peace. From now onward, the anxiety that each country has for its own safety must embrace the welfare of the world. For some time the working of the new spirit has occasionally shown itself even in the Government of India, which has had to make attempts to deal with its own problems in the light of the world problem. The war has torn away a veil from before our minds. What is harmful to the world, is harmful to each one of us. This was a maxim which we used to read in books. Now mankind has seen it at work and has understood that wherever there is injustice, even if the external right of possession is there, the true right is wanting. So that it is worth while even to sacrifice some outward right in order to gain the reality. This immense change, which is coming over the spirit of man raising it from the petty to the great, is already at work even in Indian politics. There will doubtless be imperfections and obstacles without number. Self-interest is sure to attack enlightened interest at every step. Nevertheless it would be wrong to come to the decision that the working of self-interest alone is honest, and the larger-hearted striving is hypocritical.

After sixty years of self-experience, I have found that out and out hypocrisy is an almost impossible achievement, so that the pure hypocrite is a rarity indeed. The fact is, that the character of man has always more or less of duality in it. But our logical faculty, the trap-door of our mind, is unable to admit opposites together. So when we find the good with the bad, the former is promptly rejected as spurious. In the universal movement, as it becomes manifest in different parts of the world, this duality of man's character cannot but show itself. And whenever it does, if we pass judgment from past experience, we are sure to pronounce the selfish part of it to be the real thing; for the spirit of division and exclusion did in fact belong to the past age. But if we come to our judgment in the light of future promise, then shall we understand the enlightened large-heartedness to be the reality, and the counsel which will unite each to each to be the true wisdom.

I have condemned, in unsparing terms, the present form and scope of the League of Nations and the Indian Reform Councils. I therefore fell certain that there will be no misunderstanding when I state that, even in these, I find signs of the Time Spirit, which is moving the heart of the West. Although the present form is unacceptable, yet there is revealed an aspiration, which is towards the truth, and this aspiration must not be condemned. In this morning of the world's awakening, if in only our own national striving there is no response to its universal aspiration, that will betoken the poverty of our spirit.

I do not say for a moment that we should belittle the work immediately to hand. But when the bird is roused by the dawn, all its awakening is not absorbed in its search for food. Its wings respond unweariedly to the call of the sky, its throat pours forth songs for joy of the new light. Universal humanity has sent us its call to-day. Let our mind respond in its own language; for response is the only true sign of life. When of old we were immersed in the politics of dependence on others, our chief business was the compilation of others' shortcomings. Now that we have decided to dissociate our politics from dependence, are we still to establish and maintain it on the same recital of others' sins? The state of mind so engendered will only raise the dust of angry passion, obscuring the greater world from our vision, and urge us more and more to take futile short cuts for the satisfaction of our passions. It is a sorry picture of India, which we shall display if we fail to realize for ourselves the greater India. This picture will have no light. It will have in the foreground only the business side of our aspiration. Mere business talent, however, has never created anything.

In the West, a real anxiety and effort of their higher mind to rise superior to business considerations, is beginning to be seen. I have come across many there whom this desire has imbued with the true spirit of the *Sannyasin*, making them renounce their home-world in order to achieve the unity of man, by destroying the bondage of nationalism; men who have within their own soul realized the *Advaita* of humanity. Many such have I seen in England who have accepted persecution and contumely from their fellow countrymen in their struggles to free other peoples from the oppression of their own country's pride of power. Some of them are amongst us here in India. I have seen *sannyasins* too in France—Romain Rolland for one, who is an outcast from his own people. I have also seen them in the minor countries of Europe. I have watched the faces of European students all a glow with the hope of a united mankind, prepared manfully to bear all the blows, cheerfully to submit to all the insults, of the present age for the glory of the age to come. And are we alone to be content with telling the beads of negation, harping on others faults and proceeding with the erection of *swaraj* on a foundation of quarrelsomeness? Shall it not be our first duty in the dawn to remember Him, who is One, who is without distinction of class or colour, and who with his varied *shakti* makes true provision for the inherent need of each and every class; and to pray to the Giver of Wisdom to unite us all in right understanding—

Yo ekōvarno vahudhā shakti yōgāt
Varnānanekān nihitārthodadhāti
Vichaiti chānte vishvamādau
Sa no buddhyā subhayā samyunaktu!

1921

THE UNION OF CULTURES

IT CANNOT BUT be admitted that this is a day of victory for the people of the West. The world is theirs to draw upon as they please and their stores are overflowing. We are left standing at a distance, agape, watching our share growing less and less; and with the fire of our hunger blazes the fire of our wrath. We wish we could have the opportunity of getting hold of the man who has been eating our share of the food. But so far he has got hold of us, and the opportunity still remains in his hands, and has not reached us at all.

But why does, the chance not come to us? Why is the enjoyment of the earth's plenty for them alone? Surely because of some underlying truth. It is not a case of banding ourselves together in a particular way so as to be able to deprive them and provide for ourselves. The matter is not quite so simple as that. It is mere folly to expect to get the locomotive under control by hitting the driver on the head: for it is not the man but his science which makes the engine go. So the fire of our wrath will not serve the purpose; we must acquire the requisite science, if we covet the boon which Truth has in her gift.

It is like a father with two sons. The father drives his own motor car and has promised it to the son who learns first how to drive. One of the sons is alert and full of curiosity. His eye is always on the driving to see how it is done. The other one is excessively good natured. His reverent gaze is always on his father's face. He pays no regard to what the hands are doing with lever and wheel. The clever one soon picks up the science of motor driving, and one fine day he drives off all by himself, with exultant toots of the horn. So absorbed does he become in the joy of his new acquisition that he forgets even the existence of his father. But the father does not punish him for the liberty he is taking, nor take the car away from him; for he is pleased that his son should succeed. The other son, when he sees his brother careering madly over his fields, playing havoc with his corn, dare not stand in the way to protest, even in the name of their father; for that would mean certain death. So he keeps his gaze fixed on his father's face, saying that this is all in all to him.

But whoever contemns the useful, saying he has no use for it, simply courts suffering. Every utility has its rightful claim, the ignoring of which entails a permanent slavery in the way of payment of interest until its dues are fully met. The only way to get rid of the school master's importunity is to do one's lessons properly.

There is an outside aspect of the world where it is simply an immense machine. In this aspect, its laws are fixed and do not yield by a hair's breadth either this way or that. This mechanical world gets in our way at every step; and he who, through laziness or folly, tries to evade its laws, does not succeed in cheating the machine, but only himself. On the other hand, he who has taught himself its working is able not only to avoid its obstruction, but to gain it for an ally, and so is enabled to ride swiftly over the paths of the material world. He reaches the place of his quest first, and has his fill of the good things there.

But those who have lagged behind, jogging along unaided arrive late to find very little left over for themselves.

Since these are the facts, merely to revile the science by which Westerners have gained their victory in the modern world, will not tend to relieve our sufferings, but will rather add to the burden of our sins. For this science which the West has mastered is true. If you say, it is not their science, but their satanic abuse of it to which you object, that point need not disturb us; for we may be certain that the satanic part of it will be the death of them, because Satan's way is not true.

The beasts live if they get food, and die if they get hurt. They accept what comes, without question. But one of the greatest traits of man is his habit of protesting. Unlike the beast, he is a rebel by nature. Man has achieved his glorious position in the history of the world because he has never been able to accept as final what has been imposed upon him without his concurrence or co-operation. In short, man is by no means a mild creature only; he is ever in revolt. From the beginning of his career, man has sworn to sway the world of events. How? By conquering it, or else coming to an understanding with the forces of which it is the resultant. He will never be content to be merely a fact; he needs must be a factor. He began with magical practices, because at first it seemed to him that whatever was happening was due to some wonderful magic at work behind the scenes. He felt that he also could take a hand in it, if he could but master the art. The activities which began as magic ended in science, but the motive in both cases has been the refusal to be subservient to the blind forces of nature. Those, whose efforts were successful, attained the mastery over the material world, and were no longer its slaves.

The belief in universal, immutable laws, is the basis of science, and loyalty to this belief has led to victory. Secure in this loyalty, the people of the West are winning their way through the obstructions and difficulties of the material world. But those who have held on to a lingering faith in magic have failed to acquire control over the world's mechanism, and are being defeated at every turn. At a time when we were still busy invoking the exorciser against ill and the fortune-teller against poverty and misfortune, while we were content to seek protection against small-pox from Sitala Devi, and relied on charms and spells for the destruction of our enemies, in Europe a woman asked Voltaire, whether it was true that incantations could kill a flock of sheep. She got the reply that doubtless they could, provided there was enough arsenic. I do not mean that there is no belief in magic in any corner of Europe today; but certainly belief in the efficacy of arsenic is universal. That is why they can kill when they want to, and we have to die even when we do not.

It is a platitude to be saying today that the phenomenal world is only a manifestation of universal law, and that, through the law of reason, we realise the laws of the material world. It is because we know such power to be inherent in us, that we can take our ultimate stand on our own selves. But he who, in his commerce with the universe, cannot get rid of the habit of looking to accidental interventions, tends to rely on anything and everything except

himself. One who doubts that his intelligence will avail, ceases to question, or to experiment. He casts about for some external master, and as a result is exploited, right and left, beginning from police officers and ending with malaria-breeding mosquitos. Cowardliness of intellect is a fertile source of feebleness of power.

From what period did political liberty begin to evolve in the West? In other words, when did the people of the West begin to realize, that political power was not the privilege of special individuals or classes, but depended on their own consent? It was from the time that their pursuit of science freed them from nameless fears, and they discovered that only those laws were true which could not be distorted or diverted by anyone's whim or fancy.

Giant Russia was so long the slave of her Czars, because her people relied in every matter on Providence and not in their own powers. Even now, when her Czar is gone that power which has taken his place is but dragging her through a sea of blood to the barren shore of starvation. The reason is that self-rule cannot be established through outside agency, but must be based on that self-reliance which is born of trust in one's own intellect.

I was once engaged in trying to improve one of our Bengal villages. There had been a fire and I asked the villagers how it was they had not been able to save a single homestead? "It was our fate!" they exclaimed. "Not fate," said I, "but the lack of wells. Why not make wells?" "That will be as the master pleases," was the reply. So it comes to pass that the people, whose homesteads are gutted by fate and whose wells await the master's pleasure, may lack all else but never a master.

From the very beginning God has given us Swarajya in His universe. That is to say He has given us for ourselves universal laws independent of Himself. We can not be prevented from bringing these under our control by anyone or anything except our own folly. So the Upanishat has it, that God has given us laws for our own material provisions, immutable for all time. That is to say those laws hold good for all people and all period, and all occasions. Had this not been so, man would have remained weakly dependent on God at every step, all his energies exhausted in propitiating, now this intermediary, now the other, in a chronic state of abject fear. But our God-given Magna Charta of Swaraj sets us for ever free from the wiles of all pretending intermediaries,—with our freedom firmly based on well-ordered and enduring laws. In the glowing letters of sun, moon and stars, God gives us his message: "You have no need of my help at every turn in the material world. I stand aside. On the one hand, you have the laws of matter; on the other, the laws of your mind. Use them together, and grow in greatness. The empire of the universe is yours; yours its wealth, yours its armoury of forces. May yours be the victory!"

He who accepts this charter of material Swaraj has the opportunity to achieve all other kinds of Swaraj and also to keep them when achieved. But those, who surrender their intellect to the slave-driver have no help but to be slaves in politics as well. Those who insist on invoking masters, where God Himself has refrained from asserting. His own mastery, those who court insult

where God has granted them dignity,—their self-rule will certainly mean rule after rule, the only doubt being as to that little prefix "self".

The science of material existence is in the keeping of the professors of the West. This is the science which gives us food and clothing, health and longevity and preserves us from the attacks of matter, brute and barbarian. This is the science of the unchangeable laws of matter and self-rule can only be achieved when these are brought into harmony with the laws of our mind. There is no other way.

Let us consider the case of a departure from this truth. Take the idea that, if a Mussalman draws water from the well of a Hindu, the water becomes impure. This is a confusion indeed! For, water belongs to the world of matter, and impurity to the realm of the spirit. Had it been said, that if the Hindu contemns the Mussalman, this shows the impurity of his mind, the proposition would have been intelligible, it would be wholly a spiritual question. But when impurity is imputed to the Mussalman's vessel, then that which belongs to the category of the material is taken entirely outside the scope of material laws. The intellect is defrauded of its legitimate scope. The Hindu disciple of the West will urge that this imputation of impurity is only a religious way of promulgating a sanitary doctrine. Sanitation, however, takes no account of moral purity. The answer is given us: "But it is only put thus in order to induce people, who have no faith in Science, to obey its laws." This is not a right reply. For if external compulsion be once brought in, it comes to stay. Those for whom it is made necessary, lose all initiative of their own and get into the habit of depending on injunctions. Furthermore, if truth has to be bolstered up by untruth, it ends by getting smothered. By using the phrase 'morally impure', where 'physically unclean' is meant, truth is made difficult of apprehension. Whether a thing is unclean or not can be proved. And if uncleanliness be the charge, a comparative inquiry into the vessels and wells of Hindu and Moslem should be made, and we should find out if there is anything less sanitary in the Moslem water arrangements than in those of the Hindu. Uncleanliness itself being an external fault, it can be remedied by external means. But an allegation of impurity takes the question out of the jurisdiction of the ordinary mind, and makes it a matter of religion. Is that a sound method of achieving the desired object? To keep the intellect in a state of delusion cannot be the way to attain high moral excellence. Untruth from the teacher, together with blindness in the pupil, will never create a spiritually healthy society.

So if we call Western Science 'impure', merely because it was discovered in the West, we shall not only be unable to master it, but shall also be placing in a bad light that Eastern Science which teaches of moral purity.

Here I am apprehensive of another argument. Many will ask, whether when the West was still savage, clothed in skins and living by hunting, we in the East had not been able to feed and clothe ourselves? When they fared forth merely for plunder, had we not evolved a political commonwealth? Certainly, we were then far more advanced than the West. But the reason was that, in those days, we in the East had a superior knowledge of Science and its laws. We

had then the knowledge of cultivation and weaving. That scientific knowledge went far further than mere skill in hunting which the West then possessed. It requires more science to conduct a stable government than to hunt wild beasts. How then did the parts become reversed? It was not by any trick of fate. It was by no luck or magic. Rather it was due to the West learning the same Science which the East had learnt before, and to a still more useful purpose. Therefore, it is not by looking to some external force that we can now compete with the West. We can resist their onslaught only if we make their Science our own. To say this implies that the greatest of our problems in India is the problem of Education.

But at this point in the argument, I have to answer the further question, whether I have found satisfaction in that aspect of power, which the West is now presenting to mankind. My answer would be, 'No'. What I saw did not satisfy me. The picture was that of self-aggrandizement, not that of happiness. For seven months at a stretch I have lived in the giant's Castle of Wealth, in America. Through my hotel window sky-scrapers frowned on me. They only made me think of the difference between Lakshmi, the Goddess of grace, who transmutes wealth into well-being, and the ugly god Mammon, who represents the spirit of insensate accumulation. The process of piling up has no ultimate end in view. Twice two are four, twice four are eight, twice eight are sixteen, the figures leap frog-like over increasing spans. He who is obsessed by their stride becomes intoxicated by it and revels in the glory of mere multiplication. But, what oppressiveness it produces in the mind of an onlooker, I can best explain by an analogy.

Once I was in a house-boat on the brimming autumn river, seated at the window on the eve of the full moon. Not far off, moored alongside the bank, there was an up country cargo boat, whose crew were enthusiastically engaged in entertaining themselves. Some of them had tom-toms, others had cymbals; none of them had a voice; but all of them had muscles beyond any possibility of question! And the beats of their clanging sped on from double-quick to quadruple-quick time, with the stimulus of its own frenzy. Ten o'clock passed, eleven o'clock passed; it was well on towards midnight, yet they would not stop. Why should they? Had there been a song, there would have been some natural pause. Anarchic rhythm, on the other hand, has movement, but no rest: excitement, but no satisfaction. Those rhythm-maniacs on the cargo boat had no doubt that they were scaling the topmost heights of enjoyment. But what of poor me?

I was much in the same plight over there on the other side of the Atlantic. The *crescendo* of their rhythmic advance like a wilderness of bricks and mortar was obvious. But where was the song? That was the burdening question. And standing before the forbidding might of their towering opulence, the son of indigent downtrodden India was left cold, murmuring—"What then?"

I am not for emptiness, in the garb of renunciation. External restraint is true, only when it is the expression of internal fulness,—just as time and tune are kept properly regulated because the artist is full of his song. Unmitigated

noise has no occasion for disciplined restraint. If there be the truth called Love, at the heart, enjoyment must be restrained, service must be true, that is to say, such a process of realization needs the spirit of charity to help it. The renunciation, which is in the chastity of love, is the true renunciation. The union of the Goddess of Plenitude with the God who needs no wealth is the true union.

When I was in Japan, the spirit of old Japan gave me a profound pleasure. Old Japan had found Beauty reigning on the lotus throne of her heart. In her dress and ornament, in her dwellings and furniture, in her work and play, in her rites and ceremonials, she expressed in various forms the One who is beauty. Utter penury is as unmeaning as lavish represented neither, but rather the fulness of perfection. Such fulness makes man's heart hospitable,—its passion is for welcome and not for rejection. Side by side with the old I have also seen the modern Japan. Here the spirit of the rhythm-maniac has assumed control, and its din mocks the moonlight.

By all this, I do not mean that railways and telegraphs are not needed. They gave their use, but not their message. Where man has needs, he must furnish himself with materials; but where he has fulness, there is manifest his immortality; Man's envy and hatred are in the region of his material needs, the region where he is in want. Here he erects his barricades and maintains his guards. Here he is for self-aggrandizement and for the exclusion of others. But where he is immortal he displays, not things, but his soul. He invites all to enter. His distribution does not mean diminution; and so peace reigns.

When Europe was opening out the mystery chambers of the Universe with the keys of Science, she found at every step fixed laws. And their constant presence in her field of vision ever since has caused her to forget that there is something more behind these laws, which has its harmony of delight in accord with our complete humanity. By the help of natural laws we achieve success, but man aspires to gain something greater than success. The laws which the tea-garden manager imposes on his coolies, if well-devised, tend to increase his output. But where the manager's friends are concerned, he does not dream of efficient laws. In dealing with his friends he does not increase his output; he spends his tea in entertainment. It is well to believe in the laws which make for efficiency. But if ever it is believed, that the truth of friendship is not a part of an infinite truth, then that belief tends to destroy our humanity itself. We cannot make friends with a machine. Therefore, if we cease to be aware of anything beyond mechanism, then our personality which is ever seeking its own affinity in other persons finds no permanent refuge. The West, in its one-sided pursuit of Science has been steadily thrusting personality further and further into the background till hardly any room has been left for it. If our own one-sided spiritual tendency of mind has made us lose our way and left us stranded in the quagmire of weakness and poverty, the limping gait of the West has taken it no nearer, from its own side, to humanity's goal.

True, it is difficult to cope with those who consistently keep to the tea-garden-manager outlook on the universe; for they have enlisted the services

of the genie of efficiency. The good natured man invariably gets caught by their recruiters, and once in their net, there is no escape. He has no conception of the value of fixed laws of the world. He insists on pinning his faith just where he should not, whether it be on the unluckiness of Thursday, the virtue of talismans, the trustworthiness of touts, or the honesty of tea-garden recruiters. But even the most helplessly goodnatured man has a place, beyond the reach of laws, where he can take his stand and say: "God grant I may never be born, despite my trials and troubles, to be a tea-garden manager!"

And yet the tea-garden manager also has his own methods of benevolence. He makes sanitary dwellings for his coolies, soundly and symmetrically built, and his arrangements for their supplies are admirable. But this non-human benevolence is but an appendage of efficiency. It helps to increase the profits; it bestows a kind of benefit upon the human tools. But from that springs not even a fraction of true happiness.

Let no one imagine that I am referring to the relations between the Western masters and their Eastern servants only. The undue stress laid on the mechanical side of the world, both in external and internal relations, has similarly created a split in the polity of the West. If the mechanical bonds of association be made into a fetish, the living bonds of voluntary fellowship slacken. And this, in spite of the fact that these mechanical bonds make for extraordinary mechanical efficiency. Commodities multiply, markets spread, tall buildings pierce the sky. Not only so, but in education, healing and the amenities of life, man also gains real success. That is because the machine has its own truth. But this very success makes the man, who is obsessed by its mechanism, hanker for more and more mechanism. And as his greed continually increases, he has less and less compunction in lowering man's true value to the level of his own machine.

Greed is not an ideal—it is a passion. Passion cannot create. So when any civilization gives the first place to greed, the soul relation between man and man is severed; and the more luxurious such a civilization grows in pomp and power, the poorer it becomes in truth of soul. A picture is a creation, because it is the harmony of many lines, related to one another. An engineer's plan is not a picture, because the lines there are bound to each other by some external necessity. When greed of success is the main nexus between man and man. Society becomes a huge plan and ceases to be a picture of the ideal. Man's spiritual relations are lost sight of; money becomes the prime mover; the capitalist the driver; and the rest of mankind merely the fuel for the running of the machine. It is possible to measure the value of such civilization in terms of the speed of its progress. But man, at the bottom of his heart, does not worship Mammon, and so has no real happiness in the triumphal progress of his car. Because his faith in Mammon is wanting, the cords, by which man is bound to Mammon's service, are not bonds of loyalty, but shackles. And man ever revolts when he feels himself shackled. The dark clouds of this social revolt lower only too dismally over the West. There the union, devised for exploitation, has ended in disruption. In India the union, imposed by

customary rule has resulted in emasculation. Because traditional customs and professional dealings are not ideals, therefore they make their arrangements by keeping man's soul out of the account.

What is the ideal? Jesus Christ said: "I and my father are one." Here is one ideal. "My unity with my father," is a true unity. But the unity of the coolie with the manager is not true. Again a great ideal has been given utterance to in the Isha Upanishat. "All that moves in this moving world is enveloped by God. Therefore enjoy by renunciation; never covet others' possessions." I have already referred in terms of condemnation to the greed which has become the dominant motive in the West. Why do we condemn it? The Rishi tells us the reason,— "Do not covet." Why should we not covet? Because truth cannot be obtained through greed. But if I say, "I want my enjoyment rather than truth." Well, the Rishi also says, "Enjoy." But there can be no enjoyment outside truth. What then is the truth? It is this: "All that moves in this moving world is enveloped by God." Had all that moves in the world" been itself the ultimate truth, then to keep piling up would have been the best thing to do; and greed would have been the most efficient of man's virtues. But the truth being this, that God is there, enveloping all things, we have to enjoy this truth with our soul, and for such enjoyment renunciation is needed, not greed. During my seven months' stay in America, the land mountain-high piles of lucre, I have watched this striving in the reverse direction. There, "all that moves in this moving world" has become prominent. God, who "envelops all things" has become obscured in the thick dust of dollars. Therefore, in America, the injunction to enjoy is not observed with the help of truth, but with the help of money. Truth gives us Unity. Money sets up separation. Furthermore, it keeps our soul empty. Therefore, it causes in us a hankering to fill that emptiness from outside, and we pursue the path of multiplying numbers in hot haste. While our desire runs at a break-neck pace, jumping from one figure to another in the multiplication table, we grow dizzy and forget that whatever else we may have been acquiring, it is not happiness.

Our Rishis have told us that satisfaction is only to be found in the One. Apples fall one after another. The truth about their falling cannot be arrived at by counting them: arithmetical progression marches on indefinitely and the mind turns away unsatisfied from each fresh enumeration, saying: "What does it all mean?" But when innumerable falls find their unity in the principle of gravitation, the intellect at last finds satisfaction and can say: "Enough, I have found the truth."

And what of the truth of Man. It is not in the Census Report, not in an interminable series of figures. Man is expressed, says the Upanishat, when he realises all creation in himself and himself in all creation. Otherwise his truth is obscured. There is a telling example of this in our history. When the Lord Buddha realised humanity in a grand synthesis of unity, his message went forth to China as a draught from the fountain of immortality. But when the modern empire-seeking merchant, moved by his greed, refused allegiance to this truth of unity, he had no qualms in sending to China the deadly opium poison, nay,

in thrusting it down her throat at the cannon's mouth. What could be a better illustration of how the soul of man is revealed, and how it is obscured?

Many at the present moment will exclaim: "That is just what we were saying. How can we possibly maintain relations with those, who only know how to divide, whose rapacious maw continually opens wider and wider? They know nothing of the spirit of the Infinite which is all in all to us. They follow the cult of the finite. Must we not keep at arm's length their pernicious teaching and culture?"

But this attitude is also one of division, while it has not even the merit of worldly prudence behind it. India's ancient teaching was not this. Manu says: "Restraint cannot be practised so well by leaving the world, as by remaining in it purified by wisdom." That is because the responsibility of the material world is also on us and cannot be shirked, if we would do justice to the responsibilities of the world of the spirit. So the Upanishat says: "Rescue yourself from death by the cult of the finite, and then by the cult of the infinite you shall attain immortality." Shukra, the preceptor of the Titans, was master of the art of material existence; and in his school Kacha, the emissary of the Gods, had to gain admission in order to learn the secret of immortality.

One of the first steps in the culture of the Soul is to free it from the tyranny of matter. This is the basic effort which must be made to start with; and unless the foundation be thus well and truly laid the powers of the majority of men will be exhausted in their struggles to stave off sheer physical starvation. It is quite true, that the West has kept its head bent to the ground and become so absorbed in the spade work that no time has been left to lift its head upwards. Nevertheless, it will not do for those, who aspire to live in the light and air of the upper storey to despise the spade work itself. In the region of the spirit, our seers have told us ignorance is bondage, knowledge is freedom. The same is true in the material world. Those who do not know its laws are its slaves those who do are emancipated. The bondage of external forces is an illusion which science alone can dispel.

Anyhow, the Western continents have been striving for liberation from the *maya* of matter, striking hard whenever they encounter any of the roots of that ignorance which breeds hunger and thirst, disease and want, or other ills of mundane life. In a word. they have been engaged in securing for man protection against physical death. On the other hand the striving of the Eastern peoples has been to win for man his spiritual kingdom, to lead him to immortality. By their present separateness, East and West alike are now in danger of losing the fruits of their age-long labours. That is why the Upanishat, from the beginning, has enunciated the principle, which yet may serve to unite them. "Gain protection," it says, "from death by the cult of the finite, and then by the cult of the infinite you shall attain immortality." All that moves in the moving world" is the province of Science. "God envelops all this" is the province of the philosophy of the Infinite. When the Rishi enjoins us to combine them both, then that implies the union of the East and the West. For

want of that union, the East is suffering from poverty and inertia and the West from lack of peace and happiness.

There is a danger of my being misunderstood as to what I mean by Union. I should like to make that point quite plain to my readers. Uniformity is not unity. Those who destroy the independence of other races, destroy the unity of all races of humanity. Modern Imperialism is that idea of Unity, which the python has in swallowing other live creatures. I have said before that if the spiritual altogether swallows up the material interest of man that cannot be called harmony. But when the spiritual and the material keep separate, in their own respective provinces, then they can find their unity. In like manner, when we respect the true individuality of men, then we can discover their true unity.

While Europe, after the great war, has been yearning for peace, the smaller nations have been more and more insistent in claiming self-determination. If a new era is really to be ushered in, it must be signalised by the overthrow of the monster, Wealth, and the monster, Empire, and also of the enormity of organizations. The true unity must be established upon true units. Those who co-operate with the New Age must cultivate their own individuality in order to attain successfully the spirit that shall unite. They must remember that Freedom (which is the great quest) is not of this or that nation, but of universal man.

The truth that 'the man who knows others as himself is truly revealed' is not only to be found in the pages of man's scriptures. Its working can be seen throughout human history. In the beginning, we see man gathered into separate groups within barriers of mountain and ocean. As soon as man came into touch with man, the problem of his truth as a member of the human race demanded attention. Whenever men came together, but were unable to unite, they lost their truth. Those of them, who, having come into contact, hit out wildly against one another, none trusting the other, each trying to gain the advantage, have all disappeared from the face of the earth. And those, who have tried to realize the one Soul in the souls of all, have developed into great peoples.

Thanks to Science, so many vehicles of communication are speeding over land and water and even through the air, that today there are no longer any geographical barriers. Now, not only individual men, but whole nations have come into contact, and the problem has become acute. Those whom Science has brought together how shall man put asunder? If the conjunction of man is a real union, then all goes well, otherwise nearness produces conflict. Such an age of universal conflict has come. The outward forces which are bringing men together are running at a great speed; the inner forces which make men united are lagging behind. It is as if a locomotive were to rush on with its train, the driver left behind wringing his hands in despair, while a cheering crowd of onlookers are lost in admiration at its headlong speed, crying 'This is progress indeed!' And we, the mild men of the East, who are in

the habit of trudging along on foot, how can we possibly bear the brunt of the collision? Things which are near us and yet keep aloof, if they have their movement, always give us shocks. Such a conjunction of shocks may not be comfortable, but, in certain circumstances, it may be wholesome.

However that may be, nothing is more obvious than the fact, that nations have come together, but yet are not united. The agony of this presses on the whole world. Why is it, that, in spite of its torture, the world can find no solution? Because even those, who had mastered the art of uniting within their own boundaries, have not yet learnt the secret of uniting outside them. The barrier, by limiting truth, makes truth itself at first easier of comprehension; so man is apt to give the credit to the barrier and not to the truth; he worships the priest to the exclusion of the divinity, and fears the policemen more than the king.

Nations have risen on the strength of truth, but it was not their Nationalism which was true. And yet human sacrifices are being offered to this barrier-god. So long as the victims were of alien race no question arose; but all of a sudden, in 1914, the votaries developed a mania for sacrificing one another. Then the doubt arose: 'Is this after all the right kind of household god, who fails to distinguish between kindred and stranger?' While he was fastening his fangs on the limbs of the offerings from the East, sucking out their substance, the festivity of the sacrificial rites waxed fast and furious, for stimulants were not lacking either. Today some of them are to be seen with bowed heads, oppressed with the misgiving, that perhaps this kind of riotous worship might not be altogether healthy. While the war was at its height, there was some hope that the orgy of Nationalism might soon be brought to an end. But the war, which disappeared in one aspect came back wearing the mask of peace. The thinkers of the West are bemoaning the tragic fact, that, the infatuation from which this disaster has been caused, is still as vigorous as ever. This infatuation is Nationalism, the collective Egotism of the whole nation. It is a passion whose tendency is against the ideal of Unity. Its pull is towards itself.

The peoples have come together. This great truth cannot be crushed beneath the triumphal car of any imperialistic ambition. Then we must establish relations with this truth. Otherwise there will be no end to these wars of annihilation. Since it is essential that education should fit in with the spirit of the time, the high priests of Nationalism will avail themselves of every pretext and opportunity to inculcate by means of education the doctrine of national pride in the growing generation. When Germany frankly made her Universities the servitors of her political ambitions, other European nations condemned her. But which of the greater European nations has not followed suit? The only difference has been that Germany being the greater master of scientific method, carried on the nationalistic propaganda more thoroughly. She made her education into a scientific incubator for hatching the eggs of Nationalism, and the chickens produced have been more vigorous than those of the neighbouring nations. The same has become the function of the

press,—the unremitting circulation of plausible national untruths.

An Education which can free the nations from this ungodly fetish of Nationalism is what is chiefly needed today. Tomorrow is to begin the chapter of the federation of races. Any evil tendencies of thought and sinful habits, which militate against the spirit of federation will unfit us to take our part in the history of tomorrow. I hope I can claim to be duly conscious of the glories of my own country, but my fervent prayer is that such consciousness may never make me forgetful of the earliest message of our seers, the message of unity, in which the forces of disruption have no place.

I can hear, from over the seas the wailing of men questioning themselves: 'Wherein was our sin,—in what part of our thoughts, of our education,—that this terrible suffering is ours today?' May the reply of our Rishis reach them: 'There can be no blindness and sorrow, where all beings are known as oneself and the Unity is realized.' I can hear, from over the seas, the cry for Peace. We must give them the message of our great forefathers: 'Peace is where the Good is; the Good is where there is Unity.'

SHANTAM, SHIVAM, ADVAITAM.

Unity is peace; for Unity is the Good.

I am fully conscious of the glories of my motherland, so it shames me even to think, that now, on the eve of the new age, when the command of Rudra, the Terrible, has gone forth to sweep away the rubbish of decayed ages, this same rubbish should be piled up into an altar for her worship. He who is Peace, who is Good, is the One Universal Refuge of all the different Nations of men. Cannot the chanting of the *mantra*,—Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam,—with the first fresh glow of the dawning era, rouse in us once more our ancient love of truth?

It is the dream of my heart, that the culture-centre of our country should also be the meeting ground of the East and West. In the field of business, antagonism still prevails; it struggles hard against reconcilement. In the field of culture, there is no such obstacle. The householder, who is exclusively occupied with his domestic concerns and is chary of his hospitality, is poor in spirit. No great country can afford to be confined to its kitchen, it must have its reception room where it can do honour to itself by inviting the world.

India has only government institutions, or their prototypes, for her education. By far the greater part of it consists begging for the crumbs of other people attaining. When begging becomes a habit the lack of hospitality ceases to cause shame. So the Indian Universities have no compunction in proclaiming themselves mendicants with nothing to offer in return for what they receive. It is not true that nothing is expected from them. I have often been confronted in Europe with the question: 'Where is India's voice. But when the enquirer from the West comes to India, and listens at her door he says: 'The words which we hear are only the feeble echoes of our own words the mere parodies of things preached by us.' To me, it has always seemed that when the Indian disciple of Max Muller boasts in strident tones of his Aryan descent,

there is heard all the blatant noise of the Western brass band; and also when in a frenzy of condemnation he rejects the West, there is heard only the most discordant sounds of the Western tunes.

It is my prayer that India should, in the name of all the East, establish a centre for the culture of Truth to which all may be invited. I know she lacks material wealth, but she has no lack of spiritual wisdom. On the strength of the latter she may invite the world, and be invited into every part of the world, not to hang round the threshold, but to take the seat prepared for her in the inmost chamber. But even that honour may be left out of sight. The real object of our endeavour should be to realize truth in our inner nature and then to manifest it in the outer world,—not for the sake of expediency: not for gaining honour, but for emancipating man's spirit from its obscurity. The ideal revelation of soul must be expressed, through all our education and through all our work, and then by honouring all men we shall ourselves be honoured, and by welcoming the new age we shall ourselves be freed from the burden of senility. The mantra of that education is this:

'He, who realizes all creatures in himself and himself in all creatures, is never obscured.'

1921

A VISION OF INDIA'S HISTORY

WHEN INDIVIDUAL communities, who come to dwell in the same neighbourhood, differ from each other in race and culture the first attempts at unity become too obviously mechanical in their classified compartments. Some system of adjustment is needed in all kinds of Society, but in order that a system should be successful it most completely submit itself to the principle of life and become the organ for the vital functions.

The history of India has been the history of the struggle between the constructive spirit of the machine, which seeks the cadence of order and conformity in social organization, and the creative spirit of man, which seeks freedom and love for its self-expression. We have to watch and see if the latter is still living in India; and also whether the former offers its service and hospitality to life, through which its system can be vitalized.

We know not who were the heroes of the day when the racial strife between Aryan and non-Aryan was at its height. The significant fact is that the names of such conquering heroes have not been sung in Indian epic. It may be that an episode of that race war in India lies enshrouded in the mythical version of King Janamejaya's ruthless serpent sacrifice—the attempted extermination of the entire Nāga race. There is, however, no special glorification of that king on this account. But he who strove to bring about the reconciliation between Aryan and non-Aryan is worshipped to this day as an Avatar.

As the leading figures of the grand movement of that age, which sought to embrace both Aryan and non-Aryan in a larger synthesis, we find the names of three Kshatriyas standing out in the story of the Rāmāyaṇa. There Janaka, Visvāmitra and Rāmachandra are not merely related by bonds of kinship or affection, but through oneness of ideal. What if it be possible that Janaka, Visvāmitra and Rāma may not have been contemporaries as a matter of historical fact? That does not take away from their nearness to one another in the plane of idea. Viewed from the standpoint of intervening space, the distance between the earth and the moon may loom large, and tend to obscure the fact of their relationship. There are many double stars in the firmament of history, whose distance from each other does not affect the truth of their brotherhood. We know, from the suggestion thrown out by the poet of Rāmāyana, that Janaka, Visvāmitra and Rāma, even if actually separated by time, were nevertheless members of such a triple system.

In the history of idea, as distinguished from the history of fact, a hero often comes to mean, for his race, the *ideal*; and ceases to be an individual. In Aryan history, Janaka and Visvāmitra as well as Rāma have become historical symbols. They are composite pictures of numerous personalities having a common purpose. Just as King Arthur, from the Christendom of the Dark Ages, represents the Christian Knight, the valiant champion of the faith against all challengers, so in India we get glimpses of the Kshātra ideal gathering round its champions for a determined and prolonged crusade against

its opponents. Proofs are not wanting that often these opponents were the Brahmins.

The idea, which was behind the neo-Kshatriya movement of old, cannot be known to-day in its full meaning, but still it is possible to make out the lines along which the divergence of Brahmin and Kshatriya had occurred.

The four-headed god Brahmā represents the four Vedas with all their hymns and regulations of sacrifice. The Brahmin Bhrigu, one of the most renowned priests of the ancient days, is said to have sprung from the heart of Brahmā, thereby showing that he occupied a prominent part in the cult of Vedic ceremonialism. It is said in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa that the Kshatriya king, Kārtavīrya, stole a sacrificial cow from Yamadagni, a priest of the same Bhrigu clan, which was the cause of the class-war led by Parasu-rāma, the son of Yamadagni, against the whole Kshatriya community. Unless the stealing of the sacrificial cow stands for an idea, such a crusade of the Brahmin against the entire Kshatriya class misses its meaning. It really indicates that among a great body of Kshatriyas there arose a spirit of resistance against sacrificial rites, and this gave rise to a fierce conflict between the two communities.

It has to be noted that the series of battles begun by Parsu-rāma, the descendant of Bhrigu, at last came to their end with his defeat at the hands of Rāma-chandra. This Kshatriya hero, as we all know, is accepted and adored as an incarnation of Vishnu, the deity of the monotheistic sect of Bhāgavatas. It certainly means that this fight was a fight of ideals, which terminated in the triumph of the religion in which, at a later date, Rāma-chandra occupied a central place.

It is well known that Rāma had an intimate relationship with the great king Janaka, which also we consider to be a relationship of ideals. Janaka has won from the people of India the title of Rājarshi, the kingly prophet. It has been said about him in the Bhagavad-Gitā:

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धि आस्थिता जनकादय: ।[१]

Janaka and others of his kind have attained their fulfilment through the performance of duty. This means that Janaka, and others who had the same faith as he, followed the path of moral action for attaining spiritual perfection. This was specially mentioned because it was not the path of the orthodox religion, which laid stress on ceremonials performed for the sake of averting injuries or acquiring merit or wealth. It was evidently a revolutionary movement, one of whose leaders was Janaka, and Rāma-chandra obtained his inspiration from him. Therefore when we find that it was the Kshatriya Rāma-chandra who defeated the Brahmin Parasu-rāma, we feel certain that the battle which was fought was the battle of two differing ideals.

Those institutions which are static in their nature raise their fixed walls of division. This is why, in the history of religions, priesthood has everywhere hindered the freedom of man and maintained dissensions. The moving principle of life unites. It deals with the varied, and seeks unity in order to be

[1] The *Bhagavad-Gitā*, 3/20.

able to deal truly. The Brahmins, who had the static ideals of Society in their charge, spun into elaboration the different forms of ritualism and set up sectarian barriers between clans and classes. Of the two original deities of the Indo-Aryan tribe, the Sun and Fire, the latter specially represented the cult of Brahmins. Round it different forms of sacrifice gathered and grew in number, accompanied by strict rules of incantation; with it came to be intimately associated the pluralism of divinity, since fire had always been made the vehicle of oblation to numerous gods.

The Kshatriyas, on the other hand, as they sallied forth in their endeavour against all obstacles, natural and human, developed in their life the principle which was for expansion and inclusion. Born and bred amidst the clash of forces, hostile and favourable, in the field of life's strenuous conflict, the superfine complexities of the external forms of religious worship could have no special significance for them. With them the Sun-god seems to have a special connection. From him,Manu, the law giver who was a Kshatriya, and also the great kingly line of Raghu, to which belonged Rāma-chandra, are said too have sprung. This Sun-god, in course of time, developed into the personal god Vishnu, the god of the Bhāgavata sect, the god who principally belonged to the Kshatriyas.

From Brahmā's four mouths had issued the four Vedas, revealed for all time, jealously sealed against outsiders, as unchanging as the passive features of Brahmā himself rapt in meditation. This was the symbol of Brahmanism, placid and immutable, profoundly filled with the mystery of knowledge. But the four active arms of Vishnu were busy, proclaiming the sway of the Good; expanding the cycle of unity; maintaining the reign of law; supporting the spirit of beauty and plenitude. All the symbols carried by Vishnu have the different aspects of Kshatriya life for their significance.

Brahma-vidyā, the knowledge of Supreme Truth, had its origin in the seclusion of the primeval forest of India, where the human mind could intensely concentrate itself in the depth of things and the reality of spiritual existence. The world must acknowledge its debt to the contemplative Indo-Aryan for this profound vision of truth which he has revealed to man. This Brahma-vidyā in India has followed two different courses. In the one, the Supreme Soul is viewed as monistic, absolutely negating the phenomenal world; in the other as dualistic in creative imagination, yet one in essence. Unless duality is admitted there can be no worship; but, if at the same time, fundamental unity be not recognized, the worship cannot be intimate and loving.

The original gods of the Vedas were separate from man; they received worship which consisted only of external ceremony, not the homage of love. When the relationship between God and man came to be known as based on their spiritual unity, then only the worship of love became possible. That is how the mystic Brahma-vidyā brought in its train the Religion of Love, of which the god was Vishnu. There is no doubt that the religion of love had its origin, or at least its principal support, among Kshatriyas whose freedom of

movement had the effect of liberating their minds from the coils of established forms of sacrifice.

That, naturally, there was a period of struggle between the cult of ritualism supported by the Brahmins, and the religion of love,is evident. The mark of the Brahmin Bhrigu's kick, which Vishnu carries on his breast, is a myth-relic of the original conflict. In the fact that Krishna, a Kshatriya, was not only at the head of the Vaishnava cult, but the object of its worship, that in his teaching, as inculcated in the Bhagavad-Gītā, there are hints of detraction against Vedic verses, we find a proof that this cult was developed by the Kshatriyas. Another proof is found in the fact that the two non-mythical human avatars of Vishnu, Krishna and Rāma-chandra, were both Kshatriyas, and the Vaishnava religion of love was spread by the teaching of the one and the life of the other.

The ideal, which was supported by the Kshatriya opponents of the priesthood, is represented by the Bhagavad-Gītā. It was spoken to the Kshatriya hero Arjuna, by the Kshatriya prophet Krishna. The doctrine of Yoga which it advocates—the doctrine of the disinterested concentration of life, with all its thoughts and deeds, in the Supreme Being—had its tradition, according to Krishna, along the line of the Rājarshis, the kingly prophets. He says:

एवं परम्पराप्राप्तमिमं राजर्षयो विदु: ।
स कालेनेह महता योगो नष्ट: परन्तप ।।[1]

This, handed on down the line, the king-sages knew. This Yoga, by great efflux of time, decayed in the world, O Parantapa.

That this religion of Yoga, as revived by Krishna and inculcated in the Bhagavad-Gītā, was not in harmony with Vedic scriptures is directly affirmed by the Master in his teaching to his disciple Arjuna when he says:

श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।
समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि ।।[2]

When thy mind, bewildered by the scriptures, shall stand immovable in contemplation, then shalt thou attain unto Yoga.

Krishna undoubtedly takes his stand against the traditional cult of sacrificial ceremonies, which according to him distracts our minds from the unity of realization when he speaks thus:

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपश्चित: ।
वेदवादरता: पार्थ नान्यदस्तीतिवादिन. ।।
कामात्मान: स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।
क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ।।

[1] The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 4/2.
[2] The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 2/53.

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयानहृतचेतसाम्।
व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते।।[1]

The flowery speech that the unwise utter, O Partha, clinging to the word of the Veda, saying there is nothing else, ensouled by desire and longing after heaven, the speech that offereth only rebirth as the ultimate fruit of action, that is full of recommendations to various rites for the sake of gaining enjoyments and sovereignty—the thoughts of those misled by that speech cleaving to pleasures and lordship, not being inspired with resolution, is not engaged in contemplation.

These words are evidently of him, who in his teachings has for his opponents the orthodox multitude, the believers in Vedic texts.

The Kurukshetra war, described in the Mahābhārata, was a war between two parties, one of which had rejected Krishna, the other consisting of his followers, guided by him in the war. The motive of this conflict, which had attracted all the great ruling powers of that age into one or other of the two opposing parties, could not have been a mere scramble for land between cousins. In this latter version of the epic the fact is suppressed that it was an unorthodox religious movement, acknowledging Krishna to be its prophet, that gave rise to the most desperate fight in the ancient ages in India. The very fact that Krishna was the charioteer of Arjuna is proof enough that it was a war of rival creeds; and for that very reason the battle ground of Kurukshetra has ever remained a sacred spot of pilgrimage.

It is significant to note that the lives of great Brahmins of the olden times, like that of Yājñavalkya, have the association of intellectual profundity and spiritual achievement, while those of great Kshatriyas represent ethical magnanimity which has love for its guiding principle. It is also significant that the people of India, though entertaining deep veneration for the Brahmin sages, instinctively ascribe divine inspiration to the Kshatriya heroes who actively realized high moral ideals in their personalities. Parasu-rāma, the only historical personage belonging to the Brahmin caste who has been given a place in the list of avatars, has never found a seat in the hearts of the people. This shows that, according to India, the mission of divine power in this country is to bring reconciliation, through moral influence, between races that are different—never to acquire dominance over others through physical prowess and military skill.

The most important aspect of Rāma-chandra's life, which has made the Vaishnava accept him as the incarnation of divine love, has been missed by the current version of the Rāmāyaṇa. There he is depicted merely as an ideal son, brother and husband, a paragon of the domestic virtues, a king who holds that cultivation of popularity is a duty higher than doing justice in the teeth of clamorous disapprobation. I have no doubt that the real story of his life, which has become dim in the course of time and with the growth of conventionalism,

[1] The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 2/42–44.

is concerned with his sympathy for the despised races, his love for the lowly; and that this made him the ideal of the primitive people whose totem was Hanumān.

The religion represented by the third human avatar of Vishnu, who is Buddha, has in it the same moral quality which we find in the life and teaching of Rāma and Krishna. It clearly shows the tendency of the Kshâtra ideal with its freedom and courage of intellect, and above all its heart, comprehensive in sympathy, generous in self-sacrifice.

Foreign critics are too often ready to misread the conservative spirit of India, putting it down as the trade artifice of an interested priestcraft. But they forget that there was no racial difference between Brahmin and Kshatriya. These merely represented two different natural functions of the body politic, which, though from the outside presenting the appearance of antagonism, have as a matter of fact co-operated in the evolution of Indian history. Sowing seed in one's own land and reaping the harvest for distant markets are apparently contradictory. The seed-sowers naturally cling to the soil which they cultivate, while the distributors of the harvest develop a different mentality, being always on the move. The Brahmins were the guardians of the seed of culture in ancient India and the Kshatriyas strove to put into wide use the harvest of wisdom. The principle of stability and the principle of movement, though they depend upon each other for their truth, are, in human affairs, apt to lose their balance and come into fierce conflict. Yet these conflicts, as meteorology tells us in the physical plane, have the effect of purifying the atmosphere and restoring its equilibrium. In fact, perfect balance in these opposing forces would lead to deadlock in creation. Life moves in the cadence of constant adjustment of opposites; it is a perpetual process of reconciliation of contradictions.

The divergence of ideals between the Brahmins, dwellers in the forest, and the Kshatriyas, founders of cities, often led to prolonged fights, a fact which is revealed by the story of the struggle between Vasishtha and Visvāmitra. The Brahmins were not all on one side, nor the Kshatriyas all on the other. Many Kshatriyas espoused the Brahmin cause. We are told how the Brahmanic *Vidyās* as personified in the form of three maidens outraged by Visvāmitra were sore distressed, and how the chivalrous Kshatriya King, Harischandra, came to their rescue, losing his all for their sake. Then again, Krishna in the course of his endeavour to liberate the Kshatriya victims from a dread ceremonial, slew King Jarāsandha with the help of the Pāṇḍava braves. This Jarāsandha, himself a Kshatriya, was on the other side and had defeated and imprisoned many Kshatriya kings. Krishna and the Pāṇḍavas had to disguise themselves as Brahmins in order to gain entrance within the walls of his stronghold. Many other legends bear this out. The spiritual movement started by Krishna had something in it which went against the orthodox forms of worship. This is further hinted at by the legend, belonging to a later period, of his taking the part of the Abhiras against their persecution by Indra, the king of the Vedic

gods, and preventing the devastation of the pasture land, Govardhana, held by that tribe.

Anyhow, it is abundantly clear that the ideals represented by Krishna had divided the Aryan community into two rival camps. When King Yudhishthira, as overlord, summoned a Rājasūya Yagña in order to heal those dissensions, King Sisupāla tried to wreck the proceedings by publicly insulting Krishna, the acknowledgment of whose precedence over all assembled Brahmins and Kshatriyas was the object of that great conclave. The main motive behind the devastating Kurukshetra war was this very internal strife within the community—the party which opposed Krishna being generalled by Drona, the famous Brahmin warrior, with his kinsmen Kripa and Asvatthāmā. It is a notable fact that Drona himself was a disciple of Parsu-rāma; and Karna, one of the most important fighters who stood against Krishna's party, also had Parasu-rāma for his teacher.

There can be no doubt that the period of history covered by the main incidents related in the Rāmāyaṇa, and that of the Kurukshetra war, are widely apart in time. Therefore, we have no other alternative but to admit that Parasu-rāma, who takes part in both the narratives, represents a long continued Brahmin movement, anti-Kshatriya in character; and Rāma and Krishna, who come out victorious in this conflict, have some common ideal, which also had a long period of struggle for its manifestation and development.

Any number of such stories show that the two epics of India were concerned with this same social revolution, that is to say, with the conflict of the new and the old within the Aryan community. We have its analogy in comparatively modern days when the Bengali epic, Kavikankan Chandī, was written. In this poem is also described the conflict of religious ideals, with the god Siva on one side and the goddess Chandī on the other. It represented the tragedy of the downfall of a higher principle of religion which had its devotees in the cultured classes, and the usurpation of its altar by the vindictive deity Chandī, patron of wild animals, who was worshipped by the aboriginal Vyādha tribes, as is described in the poem.

In the age of which the Rāmāyaṇa tells, Rāma-chandra was the champion of the new party. Rāma was born in the orthodox creed at the head of which was Vasishtha, the priest of the royal house. But from his boyhood he was won over by Visvāmitra, the implacable antagonist of Vasishtha. From this Kshatriya sage the Kshatriya prince received his initiation into a path of adventure, which evidently had behind it a mighty movement led by the great personalities of the age. It appears to me that Rāma's banishment had its cause in some conflict of ideals between Vasishtha, who stood as the symbol of the Brahmanic tradition, and Visvāmitra, who had fought against it and had wrenched Rāma-chandra away from the clasp of the unwilling royal household.

When later, for sectarian reasons, the story of the great movement was retold as the Rāmāyaṇa—a dynastic history—the absurd reason was invented about the weak old king yielding to a favourite wife, who took advantage of a

vague promise which could fit itself to any demand of hers, however preposterous. This story merely reveals the later degeneracy of mind, when form assumed a greater value than spirit, and some casual words uttered in a moment of infatuation could be deemed more sacred than the truth which is based upon justice and perfect knowledge.

Janaka is considered to be an embodiment of the kingly virtues of an ideal Kshatriya. In the history of the colonization of India by the Aryans, his life must have served a great purpose. We can guess from his own position in the story of the Rāmāyaṇa that he was the principal inspiration in an enterprise which had a large meaning, and that Rāma accepted his mission of life from Janaka. If we pierce through the mist which has gathered round the original narrative, we shall see that there is a general challenge to all Kshatriyas of that time in the story of Sītā 's wedding.

Sītā is said to have been no ordinary mortal. She came out of the soil itself when King Janaka was employed in ploughing, as was his wont. 'Furrow-line' is the meaning which the name 'Sītā' bears. This daughter of the soil he promised to give in marriage to him who could break the bow of Siva. Rāma was led to this trial by Visvāmitra, and he succeeded first in bending the bow and then breaking it, thereupon being declared worthy of receiving Sītā from the hand of Janaka. A great fact of history, which very probably occupied a large expanse of time and was borne along by several generations of heroes, appears to have been condensed in this story. Janaka was one of those sublime figures who could focus in himself all the significance of an epoch-making endeavour, scattered through time and space.

The fact that Janaka's personality comprehended in its inner realization the Brahma-vidyā, and in its outer activity the cultivation of the soil, indicates that the Kshatriya kings developed the art of agriculture, on which the civilization of the Aryans of India was established. Originally the tending of flocks had been the main occupation of the Aryan tribes. This pastoral life likewise suited the forest tracts of India, and Brahmins in their forest retreats continued to regard the cow as their principal wealth. But though tending cattle was fit for the nomad life or for that of small groups of individuals living in forests, the concentration of large bodies of men in cities required the organized production of food. Naturally, the necessity of such organization was more keenly felt by Kshatriyas, who were founders of cities, than by the others. Therefore in the life of Janaka, the ideal king of ancient India, are seen, side by side, Brahma-vidyā—the philosophy which, if truly accepted, could be the spiritual support of the unity of races—and Agriculture which could be the material support of the economic union effected by the large communities. And just as the European colonists in America, while cutting down its forests, had to contest every step with the aborigines who depended on the chase for their living, so also in India the pioneers of agriculture encountered the opposition of the non-Aryans living in its wildernesses, whose fierce onslaughts made their task far from easy.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Zarathushtra, the great spi-

ritual master of ancient Iran, had, like Janaka himself, an ideal which combined spiritual wisdom with a faith in agricultural civilization. And it also became his mission to save agriculture from the depredation of nomadic hordes.

Let me quote from 'Zarathushtra in Gathas,' translated from Dr Geiger's book on the subject, a passage which bears strong analogy to the aspect of the old Aryan history in India as revealed by the legend of Janaka. He says:

> The Iranian people of the Gathic period were, in fact, subdivided into husbandmen and nomads, and in the sharp opposition which obtained between the two, the prophet Zarathushtra played a prominent part. In a number of Gathic passages we see him standing as an advocate of the settled husbandmen. He admonishes them not to be tired of their good work, to cultivate diligently the fields and to devote to their cattle that fostering care which they deserve. And far and wide spreads the dominion of husbandmen and the settlements of the pious people increase, in spite of all molestations, all persecutions and violence, which they have to suffer from the nomads who attack their settlements in order to desolate their son fields and to deprive them of their herds.

King Janaka reigned over Mithila, which shows that the Aryan colonies had extended along the North to the easternmost natural boundary of India. But the Vindhya hills were then inaccessible, and the forest regions to their South remained intact. Here the Dravidian culture had reached its height, proving a formidable rival to that of the Aryans, and here the puissant Rāvaṇa had established the Dravidian god, Siva, defeating Indra and other Vedic deities.

The question which then arose in the Aryan community as to who should be the champion of their civilization, proving his competency to carry his standard forward by success in the preliminary trial of the breaking of *Haradhanu*, Siva's bow, is to be read in the same light. He who could break the strong resistance of the Siva-worshippers and carry into the South the civilization which had Brahma-Vidyā for its spirit, and for its body Agriculture, would verily win, for his spouse, Janaka's earth-born daughter Sītā.

When Rāma-chandra set out under his master Visvāmitra on what became his life-mission he started, even at that early age, by emerging triumphant through three severe tests. First, he slew the foremost of the obstructive barbarians in the vicinity. Next, at his skilled touch, the desert soil which had lain for long years bound in the hardness of stone—becoming Ahalyā, not fit for ploughing—resumed the bloom of life. It was the self-same soil which Rishi Gautama, the foremost of the early Aryan pioneers who had striven to drive the plough southwards, had found treacherous and had abandoned in despair. Thirdly, to the prowess and wisdom of this disciple of the Kshatriya sage was due the subduing of the virulence of the anti-Kshatriya movement personified in the Brahmin Parasu-rāma.

Both in the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, the wedding of the principal heroes is connected with the story of a preliminary trial. This is not a mere

chance coincidence. It is the crystallization, in the memory of the race, of a great fact which had an epoch-making character. In both cases, it was the acknowledgment of a difficult ideal which involved the heroic responsibility of upholding it in the teeth of desperate opposition. In both cases the bride was not a mortal woman, but a great mission. The trial described in the Mahābhārata is the piercing of a disc in the sky, difficult to discern, fixed in the centre of a revolving wheel, which has to be reached by concentrating one's attention on its shadow reflected in a vessel of water. This trial is obviously of a spiritual nature. The fixed centre of Truth in the heart of the revolving wheel of the World (*Samsāra*) is reflected in the depth of our own being, which can be reached by the one-pointed concentration of Yoga. Is not this the doctrine of the Gītā in the language of a picture? The symbolism of the piercing of the target is well known to us, as it is used in the Upanishad:

> प्रणवोधनुः शरो ह्यात्माब्रह्म तत् लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।[१]
>
> The bow is omkāra,—the utterance of the sound Om, which helps mental concentration,—the soul is the arrow, and the Infinite the target.

Though it was Arjuna who originally won the maiden whose name was Krishṇā, she was accepted in marriage by all the brothers. It is ridiculous to try to establish, on the strength of this fact, that the Pāṇḍava clan came from the Himalayan regions, where polyandry is tolerated. As a matter of fact, it was a sacred rite of ideal polyandry which came to be shared by all the brothers. Krishnā is the impersonation of the truth taught by Krishna himself, which had some association with the Sun-worship which was the original meaning of Vishnu-worship. It is related in the epic that in the vessel carried by Krishṇā food would become inexhaustible when she invoked the sun to help her. This must refer to the unlimited spiritual food ready for all guests who chose to come and enjoy it.

Evidently, the Pāñchāla kingdom was one of the great centres of this unorthodox religion led by the Kshatriyas. It is to be noted that it was in Pāñchāla that the Brahmin student, Svetaketu, went to the Kshatriya King, Pravāhana Jaibāli, for instruction in the mystic philosophy consisting in the doctrine that the creative process going on in the world of stars, in sky and earth, and in man himself, is a perpetual ceremony of sacrifice, for which the sacrificial fire appears in different aspects and forms. We know the story of how the Brahmin Drona had a grudge against the King of Pāñchāla owing to the latter not recognizing the right of his Brahmin comrade to an equal share in his kingly wealth and power. It is not unlikely that in this legend lies hidden the history of the conflict between the power of the priesthood and that of the religious movement started by the Kshatriyas.

It can be surmised that it was from the province of Pāñchāla, in the close neighbourhood of Mathurā, that the Pāṇḍava brothers received the new creed preached by Krishna. It is significant that the Brahmin Drona, who originated

[1] The *Mundakopanishad*, 2/2/36.

the quarrel, was the first general on the side of the Kurus. Krishṇā was insulted by the Kuru brothers, as was Sītā by Rāvaṇa, and she was rescued from her humiliation by Krishna. It was proved to those who tried to expose her to indignities that her veil of honour, was of unlimited length, just as the food in her vessel was inexhaustible. It was proved, in like manner, that Rāvaṇa had not the power to defile Sītā, though, for a time, she was under his dominance, for ideal truth is inviolable ever though it may remain for a time in obscurity. That the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa, the rescuer of Sītā, and the hero of the Mahābhārata, the friend of Krishṇā, both occupied the same exalted position in the later Vaishnava religion, is not a mere accident. This fact itself gives us the clue that the original narration in the case of both the epics had for its motive the great fight for the ideal, which ushered in a new age with its new outlook upon life.

It is evident that the sun, which is the one source of light and life to us, had led the thoughts of the Indo-Aryan sages towards the monotheistic ideal of worship. The following prayer addressed to the sun, with which the Ishopanishad is concluded, is full of the mystic yearning of the soul:

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये।।[१]

O Sun, nourisher of the world, Truth's face lies hidden in thy golden vessel. Take away thy cover for his eyes, who is a devotee of Truth.

According to the Chāndogya Upanishad, the teacher Ghora, after having explained to his disciple Krishna, who had become *apipāsa*, free from desire, the consecration ceremony which leads to giving oneself a new spiritual birth, and in which *austerity, almsgiving, harmlessness, truthfulness* are one's gifts for the priests, winds up his teaching with these words: 'In the final hour one should take refuge in these three thoughts: *You are the Indestructible; you are the Unshaken, you are the very Essence of Life*'. On this point there are these two Rig verses:

आदित् प्रत्नस्य रेतसो
ज्योतिष्पश्यन्ति वासरम्
परो यदिध्यते दिवि।
उदवयं तमसस्परि
ज्योतिष्पश्यन्त उत्तरम्
–स्व: पश्यन्त उत्तरम्–
देव देवत्रा सूर्यम्
अगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तममिति
–ज्योतिरुत्तममिति।।[२]

Proceeding from primeval seed,
The early morning light they see,

[1] The *Ishopanishad*, 15.
[2] Quoted in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 3/17/7 from the *Rigveda* (8/6/30 and 1/50/10) with slight changes.

That gleameth higher than the heaven,
From out of darkness all around,
We, gazing on the higher light—
Yea, gazing on the higher light—
To Surya, god among the gods,
We have attained the highest light!
—Yea, the highest light![1]

We find a hint here of the teaching which was developed by Krishna into a great religious movement which preached freedom from desire and absolute devotion to God, and which spiritualized the meaning of ceremonies. That this religion had some association with the sun can be inferred from the legend of Krishnā finding an inexhaustible store of food in her vessel after her worship of the sun, and also the one about the piercing of the target of the disc by Arjuna, which very likely was the mystic disc of the sun, the golden vessel that holds Truth hidden in it, the Truth which has to be attained by piercing the cover.

It is interesting to see how in the history of religion the sun has also had a strong monotheistic suggestion in civilizations other than the Aryan. The great Egyptian King, Akhenaten, belonging to the 14th century BC, struggled against the congregated might of the priestly polytheistic ceremonials, substituting for them the purer form of worship of 'the radiant energy of the sun'. Here also we find the significant analogy of a religious revolution, initiated by one belonging to the kingly caste, against the opposition of the orthodox priestly sect of the land. This Egyptian King, like other prophets of his type, speaks of the truth coming to him as a personal revelation when he sings:

Thou art in my heart, there is none
Who knoweth thee excepting thy son;
Thou causest that he should have understanding,
In thy ways and in thy might.

'In ethics a great change also marks this age,' says Prof. Flinders Petrie. 'The motto 'Living in Truth' is constantly put forward as the keynote to the king's character, and to his changes in various lines.'[2] Thus we find that History is a plagiarist that steals its own ideals over and over again.

In connection with this we have to note that the spiritual religion which Krishna preached must have ignored the exclusiveness of priestly creeds and extended its invitation to peoples of all classes, Aryans and non-Aryans alike. The legend of his intimate relationship with the shepherd tribes supports this view, and we still find the religion, of which Krishna is the centre, to be the great refuge of the lower castes and outcastes of the present Indian population. The most significant fact of Indian history is that all the human avatars of Vishnu had, by their life and teaching, broken the barriers of priestcraft by

[1] *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, translated by R.E. Hume, 1921, pp. 212–13.
[2] W.M. Flinders Petrie, *A History of Egypt*, p. 218.

acknowledging the relation of fellowship between the privileged classes and those that were despised.

There came the day when Rāma-chandra, the Kshatriya of royal descent, embraced as his friend and comrade the lowest of the low, the untouchable *chandāla*, Guhaka—an incident in his career which to this day is cited as proof of the largeness of his soul. During the succeeding period of conservative reaction, an attempt was made to suppress this evidence of Rāma-chandra's liberality of heart in a supplemental canto of the epic, which is an evident interpolation; and in order to fit it with the later ideal, its votaries did not hesitate to insult his memory by having it in their rendering of the episode that Rāma beheaded with his own hands an ambitious Sudra for presuming to claim equal status in the attainment of spiritual excellence. It is like the ministers of the Christian religion, in the late war, taking Christ's name for justifying the massacre of men.

However that may be, India has never forgotten that Rāma-chandra was the beloved comrade of a *chandāla*; that he appeared as divine to the primitive tribes, some of whom had the totem of monkey, some that of bear. His name is remembered with reverence because he won over his antagonists as his allies and built the bridge of love between Aryan and non-Aryan.

This is the picture we see of one swing of the pendulum in the Aryan times. We shall never know India truly unless we study the manner in which she reacted to the pull of the two opposite principles, that of self-preservation represented by the Brahmin, and that of self-expansion represented by the Kshatriya.

When the first overtures towards social union were being made, it became necessary for the Aryans to come to an understanding with the non-Aryan religion as well. In the beginning, as we have seen, there was a state of war between the followers of Siva and the worshippers of the Vedic gods. The fortune of arms favoured sometimes one side, sometimes the other. Even Krishna's valiant comrade, Arjuna, had once to acknowledge defeat at the hands of Siva of the *Kirātas*, a hunter tribe. Then there is the well known record of a refusal to give Siva place in a great Vedic sacrifice, which led to the breaking up of the ceremony by the non-Aryans. At last, by the identification of Siva with the Vedic Rudra, an attempt had to be made to bring this constant religious antagonism to an end. And yet in the Mahābhārata we find the later story of a battle between Rudra and Vishnu, which ended in the former acknowledging the latter's superiority. Even in Krishna worship we find the same struggle, and therefore in the popular recitation of Krishna legends we often hear of Brahmā's attempt at ignoring Krishna, till at last the ancestor god of the Aryans is compelled to pay homage to the later divinity of the populace. These stories reveal the persisting self-consciousness of the new-comers even after they had been admitted to the privileges of the old-established pantheon.

The advent of the two great Kshatriya founders of religion, Buddha and Mahāvīra, in the same eastern part of India where once Janaka had his seat,

brought into being a spirit of simplification. They exercised all their force against the confusing maze of religions and doctrines, which had beset the bewildered country and through which it could not find its goal. Amidst the ceremonial intricacies on the one hand, and the subtleties of metaphysical speculation on the other, the simple truth was overlooked that creeds and rites have no value in themselves; that human welfare is the one object towards which religious enthusiasm has to be directed. These two Kshatriya *sannyāsins* refused to admit that any distinctions between man and man were inherent and perpetual; according to their teaching, man could only be saved by realizing truth, and not by social conformity or non-ethical practice. It was wonderful how the triumph of these Kshatriya teachers rapidly overcame all obstacles of tradition and habit, and swept over the whole country.

Long before the full flood of the Buddhistic influence had subsided, most of the protecting walls had been broken down, and the banks of the discipline through which the forces of unification had been flowing in a regulated stream had been obliterated. In fact, in departing, Buddhism left all the numerous aboriginal diversities of India to rear their heads unchecked, because one of the two guiding forces of Indian history had been enfeebled, which with its spirit of resistance had been helping the process of assimilation.

In the midst of the Buddhistic revolution only the Brahmins were able to keep themselves intact, because the maintaining of exclusiveness had all along been their function. But the Kshatriyas had become merged into the rest of the people, and so in the succeeding age we find that most of the kings had ceased to belong to Kshatriya dynasties. Then there were the Sakas and the Hunas whose repeated hordes flowed into India and got mixed with the elder inhabitants. The Aryan civilization, thus stricken to the quick, put forth all its life force in a supreme attempt at recovery, and its first effort was directed to regaining its race consciousness, which had been overwhelmed.

During the long period of this social and religious revolution, which had the effect of rubbing out the individual features of the traditional Aryan culture, the question 'What am I?' came to the forefront. The rescue of the racial personality from beneath the prevailing chaos became the chief endeavour. Aroused by the powerful shock of a destructive opposition, it was then, for the first time, that India sought to define her individuality. When she now tried to know and name herself, she called to mind the empire of Bhārata, a legendary suzerain of by-gone days, and defining her boundaries accordingly, she called herself Bhāratavarsha. She tried to pick up the lost threads of her earlier achievements in order to restore the fabric of her original civilization. Thus collection and compilation, not new creation, were characteristics of this age. The great sage of this epoch, Vyāsa, who is reported to have performed this function, may not have been one real person, but he was, at any rate, the personification of the spirit of the times.

The movement began with the compilation of the Vedas. Now that it had become necessary to have some common unifying agent, the Vedas, as the oldest part of Aryan lore, had to be put on a pedestal for the purpose, in order

to serve as a fixed centre of reference round which the distracted community could rally.

Another task undertaken by this age was the gathering and arranging of historical material. In this process, spread over a long period of time, all the scattered myths and legends were brought together, and not only these but also the beliefs and discussions of every kind which still lingered in the racial memory. And thus a great literacy image of the Aryan India of old was formed which was called the Mahābhārata—the great Bhārata. The very name shows the awakened consciousness of the unity of the people struggling to find its expression and permanent record.

The eager effort to gather all the drifting fragments from the wreck resulted in the overloading with indiscriminate miscellanies of the central narrative of the epic. The natural desire of the artist to impart an aesthetic relevancy to the story was swamped by the exigency of the time. The most important need of the age was for an immortal epic, a majestic ship fit to cross the sea of time, to serve the purpose of carrying various materials for the building of a permanent shelter for the race mind.

Therefore, though the Mahābhārata may not be history in the modern western definition of the term, it is, nevertheless, a receptacle of the historical records which had left their impress upon the living memory of the people for ages. Had any competent person attempted to sift and sort and analyse this material into an ordered array of facts, we should have lost the changing picture of Aryan society which they present, a picture in which the lines are vivid or dim, connected or confusedly conflicting, according to the lapses of memory, changes of ideal, and variations of light and shade incident to time's perspective. Self-recording annals of history, as they are imprinted on the living tablet of ages, are bared before our sight in this great work.

The genius of that extraordinary age did not stop short at the discovery of the thread of unity on which were strung the variegated materials scattered through its history; it also searched out the unity of a spiritual philosophy running through all contradictions that are to be found in the metaphysical speculations of the Vedas. The outline presentation of this philosophy was made by the same Vyāsa, who had not only the industry to gather and piece together details, but also the power to visualize the whole in its completeness. His compilation is a creative synthesis.

One thing which remains significant is the fact that this age of compilation has insisted upon the sacredness of the Brahmins and Brahminic lore by constant reiteration in exaggerated language. It proves that there was a militant spirit fighting against odds, and that a complete loss of faith in the freedom of intellect and conscience of the people had come about. Its analogy can be found in the occasional distrust of democracy which we observe among some modern intellectuals of Europe.

The main reason for this was that, during the period of alternating ascendancy of Brahmin and Kshatriya, the resulting synthesis had its unity of Aryan character, but when during the Buddhist period not only non-Aryans

but also non-Indians from outside gained free access, it became difficult to maintain organic coherence. A strong undercurrent of race-mingling and religious compromise had set in, and as the mixed races and beliefs began to make themselves felt, the Aryan forces of self-preservation struggled to put up wall beyond wall in order to prevent successive further encroachments. Only those intrusions which could not be resisted found a place within extended barriers.

Let no one imagine, however, that the non-Aryan contributions were taken in by sheer force of circumstance only, and that they had no value of their own. As a matter of fact, the old Dravidian culture was by no means to be despised, and the result of its combination with the Aryan, which formed the Hindu civilization, was that the latter acquired both richness and depth under the influence of its Dravidian component. Dravidians might not be introspective or metaphysical, but they were artists, and they could sing, design and construct. The transcendental thought of the Aryan by its marriage with the emotional and creative art of the Dravidian gave birth to an offspring which was neither fully Aryan, nor Dravidian, but Hindu.

With its Hindu civilization, India attained the gift of being able to realize in the commonplaceness of life, the infinity of the Universal. But on the other hand, by reason of the mixed strain in its blood, whenever Hinduism has failed to take its stand on the reconciliation of opposites which is of its essence, it has fallen a prey to incongruous folly and blind superstition. This is the predicament in which Hindu India has been placed by its birthright. Where the harmony between the component differences has been organically effected, there beauty has blossomed; so long as it remains wanting, there is no end to deformities. Moreover, we must remember that not only the Dravidian civilization, but things appertaining to primitive non-Aryan tribes also, found entrance into the Aryan polity; and the torment of these unassimilable intrusions has been a darkly cruel legacy left to the succeeding Hindu society.

When the non-Aryan gods found place in the Aryan pantheon, their inclusion was symbolized by the Trinity, Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva—Brahmā standing for the ancient tradition, exclusive externalism; Vishnu for the transition when the original Vedic Sun-god became humanized and emerged from the rigid enclosure of scriptural texts into the world of the living human heart; and Siva for the period when the non-Aryan found entrance into the social organization of the Aryan. But though the Aryan and non-Aryan thus met, they did not merge completely. Like the Ganges and the Jumna at their confluence, they flowed on together in two separately distinguishable streams.

In spite of Siva's entry amongst the Aryan gods, his Aryan and non-Aryan aspects remained different. In the former, he is the lord of ascetics, who, having conquered desire, is rapt in the bliss of *nirvāṇa*, as bare of raiment as of worldly ties. In the latter, he is terrible, clad in raw, bleeding elephant hide, intoxicated by the hemp decoction. In the former, he is the replica of Buddha, and as such has captured many a Buddhist shrine; in the latter, he is the

overlord of demons, spirits and other dreadful beings, who haunt the places of the dead, and as such has appropriated to himself the worshippers of the phallus, and of snakes, trees and other totems. In the former, he is worshipped in the quietude of meditation; in the latter, in frenzied orgies of self-torture.

Similarly in the Vaishnava cult, Krishna, who became the mythological god of the non-Aryan religious legends, was not the same in character as the brave and sagacious ruler of Dvārakā who acted as the guide, philosopher and friend of the valiant Arjuna. Alongside the heights of the Song Celestial are ranged the popular religious stories of the cowherd tribes.

But in spite of all that was achieved, it was quite impossible, even for the Aryan genius, to bring into harmony with itself and assimilate each and every one of the practices, beliefs and myths of innumerable non-Aryan tribes. More and more of what was non-Aryan came to be not merely tolerated, but welcomed in spite of incongruities, as the non-Aryan element became increasingly predominant in the race mixture. This led to the formulation of the principle that any religion which should satisfy the capacity of a particular sect was enough for its salvation. But in consequence, the organizing force was reduced to the mere compulsion of some common customs, some repetition of external practices, which barely served loosely to hold together these heterogeneous elements. For the mind which has lost its vigour, all external habits become tyrannical. The result for India is that the tie of custom which is extraneous has become severely tight, hardly leaving any freedom of movement even in insignificant details of life. This has developed in the people an excessively strong sense of responsibility to the claims of the class tradition which divides, but not the conviction of that inner moral responsibility which unites.

We have seen how, after the decline of Buddhism, a path had to be cleared through the jungle of rank undergrowth which had been allowed to run wild during the prolonged inaction of the Brahmanic hierarchy. At the latter end of its career in India the mighty stream of Buddhism grew sluggish and lost itself in morasses of primitive superstitions and promiscuous creeds and practices, which had their root in non-Aryan crudities. It had lost its depth of philosophy and breadth of humanity, which had their origin in the Aryan mind.

Therefore the time came for the Brahmins to assert themselves and bring back into the heart of all this incongruity some unity of ideal, which it had always been their function to maintain. It was now a difficult task for them because of the varied racial strains which had become part of the constitution of the Indian people. And so, in order to save their ideals from the attack of this wild exuberance of heterogeneous life, they fixed them in a permanent rigidity. This had the reactionary effect of making their own ideals inert, and unfit for adaptation to changes of time; while it left to all the living elements of the different races included in the people their freedom of growth, unguided by any dictates of reason. The result has been our huge medley of

customs, ceremonials and creeds, some of which are the ruins of the old, and some merely the anomalies of the living outgrowths which continue clinging to them and smothering them in the process.

And yet the genius of India went on working, albeit through the tremendous obstacle of the shackled mind of the people. In the Vedic times, as we have seen, it was mainly the Kshatriyas who repeatedly brought storms of fresh thought into the atmosphere of the people's life whenever it showed signs of stagnation. In later ages, when the Kshatriyas had lost their individuality, the message of the spiritual freedom and unity of man mainly sprang from the obscure strata of the community, where belonged the castes that were despised. Though it has to be admitted that in the medieval age the Brahmin Rāmānanda was the first to give voice to the cry of unity, which is India's own, and in consequence lost his honoured privileges as a Brahmin guru, yet it is none the less true that most of our great saints of that time, who took up this cry in their life and teaching and songs, came from the lower classes, one of them being a Muhammadan weaver, one a cobbler, and several coming from ranks of society whose touch would pollute the drinking water of the respectable section of Hindus. And thus the living voice of India ever found its medium even in the darkest days of our downfall, the voice which proclaimed that he only knows Truth who knows the unity of all beings in the spirit.

The age in which we now live, we cannot see clearly in its true features, as from without. Yet we feel that the India of to-day has roused herself once more to search out her truth, her harmony, her oneness, not only among her own constituent elements, but with the great world. The current of her life, which had been dammed up in stagnation, has found some breach in the wall and can feel the pulse of the tidal waves of humanity outside. We shall learn that we can reach the great world of man, not through the effacement but through the expansion of our own individuality. We shall know for certain that just as it is futile mendicancy to covet the wealth of others in place of our own, so also to keep ourselves segregated and starved by refusing the gift which is the common heritage of man because it is brought to us by a foreign messenger, only makes for utter destitution.

Our western critics, whose own people, whenever confronted with non-western races in a close contact, never know any other solution of the problem but extermination or expulsion by physical force, and whose caste feeling against darker races is brutally aggressive and contemptuous, are ready to judge us with a sneering sense of superiority when comparing India's history with their own. They never take into consideration the enormous burden of difficulty which Indian civilization has taken upon itself from its commencement. India is the one country in the world where the Aryan colonizers had to make constant social adjustments with peoples who vastly outnumbered them, who were physically and mentally alien to their own race, and who were for the most part distinctly inferior to the invaders. Europe, on the other hand, is one in mind; her dress, custom, culture, and with small variations her habits,

are one. Yet her inhabitants, although only politically divided, the perpetually making preparations for deadly combats, wherein entire populations indulge in orgies of wholesale destruction unparalleled in ferocity in the history of the barbarian. It is not merely such periodic irruptions of bloody feuds that are the worst characteristic of the relationship between the countries of Europe, even after centuries of close contact and intellectual co-operation, but there is also the intense feeling of mutual suspicion generating diplomatic deceitfulness and shameless moral obliquities.

India's problem has been far more complex than that of the West, and I admit that our rigid system of social regulation has not solved it. For, to bring order and peace at the cost of life is terribly wasteful, whether in the policy of government or of society. But all the same, I believe that we have cause to be proud of the fact that for a long series of centuries beset with vicissitudes of stupendous proportions, crowded with things that are incongruous and facts that are irrelevant, India still keeps alive the inner principle of her own civilization against the cyclonic fury of contradictions and the gravitational pull of the dust.

This has been the great function of the Brahmins of this land, to keep the lamp lighted when the storm has been raging on all sides. It has been their endeavour gradually to permeate the tremendous mass of obstructive material with some quickening ideal of their own that would transmute it into the life-stuff of a composite civilization; to discover some ultimate meaning in the inarticulate primitive forms struggling for expression, and to give it a voice. In a word, it was the mission of the Brahmin to comprehend by the light of his own mature understanding the undeveloped minds of the people.

It would be wrong for us, when we judge the historical career of India, to put all the stress upon the accumulated heap of refuse, gross and grotesque, that has not yet been assimilated in one consistent cultural body. Our great hope lies there, where we realize that something positively precious in our achievements still persists in spite of circumstances that are inclement. The best of us still have our aspiration for the supreme end of life, which is so often mocked at by the prosperous people who hold their sway over the present-day world. We still believe that the world has a deeper meaning than what is apparent, and that therein the human soul finds its ultimate harmony and peace. We still know that only in this spiritual wealth and welfare does civilization attain its end, and not in a prolific production of materials, not in the competition of intemperate power with power.

It has certainly been unfortunate for us that we have neglected the cult of *Anna Brahma*, the infinite as manifested in the material world of utility, and we are dearly paying for it. We have set our mind upon realizing the eternal in the intensity of spiritual consciousness so long, that we have overlooked the importance of realizing the infinite in the world of extension by ever pursuing a path which is endless. And in this great field of adventure the West has attained its success, for which humanity has to be immensely grateful to it.

But the true happiness and peace are awaiting the children of the West

in the *tapasyā*, which is for realizing Brahma in spirit, for acquiring the luminous inner vision before which the sphere of immortality reveals itself. If ever that time comes, if the western world does not meet its catastrophic end under the trampling tread of contending commerce and politics, of monstrous greed and hatred, then the world will owe its gratitude to the Brahmins for the faith in the infinitude of the human spirit which they have upheld in the face of forces that spurned it, exultingly counting the skulls of their victims.

I love India, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons: *Satyam, Jñānam, Anantam Brahma*, Brahma is truth, Brahma is wisdom, Brahma is infinite; *Sāntam, Sivam, Advaitam*, peace is in Brahma, goodness is in Brahma, and the unity of all beings.

ब्रह्मनिष्ठोगृहस्थ: स्यात् तत्त्वज्ञानपरायण. ।
यद्यत् कर्म प्रकुर्वीत तद्ब्रह्मणि समर्पयेत् । ।[1]

The householder shall have his life established in Brahma, shall pursue the deeper truth of all things and in all activities of life dedicate his works to the Eternal Being.

Thus we have come to know that what India truly seeks is not a peace which is in negation or in some mechanical adjustment, but that which is in *Sivam*, in goodness, which is in *Advaitam*, in the truth of perfect union; that India does not enjoin her children to cease from *karma*, but to perform their *karma* in the presence of the Eternal, with the pure knowledge of the spiritual meaning of existence; that this is the true prayer of Mother India:

य एकोऽवर्णोबहुधा शक्तियोगाद्
वर्णाननेकान्निहितार्थोदधाति ।
विचैति चान्ते विश्वमादौ सदेव:
सनोबुद्धया शुभया संयुनक्तु । ।[2]

He who is one, who is above all colour distinctions, who dispenses the inherent needs of men of all colours, who comprehends all things from their beginning to the end, let Him unite us to one another with the wisdom which is the wisdom of goodness.

1923

[1] The *Mahānirvāṇ Tantra*, 8/23.
[2] The *Svetāsvataropanishad*, 4/1
All the translations of the verses from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* are in the words of Annie Besant.

THE WAY TO UNITY

NOW THAT MUTUAL intercourse has become easy, and the different peoples and nations of the world have come to know one another in various relations, one might have thought that the time had arrived to merge their differences in a common unity. But the significant thing is, that the more the doors are opening and the walls breaking down outwardly, the greater is the force which the consciousness of individual distinction is gaining within. There was a time when we believed that men were remaining separate, because of the obstacles between them; but the removal of these to the largest possible extent, is not seen to have the effect of doing away with the differences between diverse sections of mankind.

The smaller nations, who had been content to remain attached to one or other of the greater powers, have become restlessly anxious to be established on their own separate bases. Norway and Sweden have become divided from each other. Ireland has been struggling unweariedly through many a long year to achieve her separateness; her people, meanwhile, also being busy with the revival of their own literature. The Flemings have become enthusiastic about winning a distinct place for their original language and culture in Belgium, where so long French had reigned undisputed. The minor peoples who lived side by side within the Empire of Austria, have burst their bonds and are happy to have their separate existence. Russia in its frantic efforts to absorb Finland discovered that it was easier to swallow than to assimilate. For all the blood which flowed in Turkey, in her day of undisputed Empire, the differences of her subject races could not be washed away. For England, the desire to consolidate her overseas dominions into integral parts of a truly imperial body, has become an obsession; but none of the proposals for facilitating centralised control has met with favour in her colonies, who protest vigorously whenever any specific freedom of theirs is at stake.

The shibboleths, that unification means strength, or that bulk means greatness, do not hold today. Where there is a true distinction, its truth does not admit of being blindly overlooked for the sake of expediency, or in the hope of greater solidarity. Suppressed distinctions are dangerously explosive, and if allowed to remain suppressed may burst out in a revolution at the slightest shock. The true way to maintain a harmonious unity is by according due respect to the true distinctness of the different parts.

When man realises his own individuality, it stimulates his desire to grow greater. This growth of greatness for an individual can only become real by establishing wide relationship with a large number of other individuals. He who has no conscious regard for his own personality, lets go the helm of self and becomes merged in the crowd. In this he does not attain greatness, because one's relation to a crowd is a superficial relation of mere propinquity, with no scope for that ever-active voluntary adjustment which is living and creative. The differences of sleeping men are hardly perceptible, but these

loudly assert themselves in the waking state. In the bud, the petals are compressed into oneness: only when each petal attains its separate distinctness, does it find its perfect unity in a flower and can help to attain the common object, which is fruition. Today the clash of the different parts of the world coming into contact, has brought about a general awakening, and under the law of manifestation each part is seeking its own self-unfoldment. No living thing, whose vital force is awake can feel itself any the greater by merging into something else, however large; it stakes its very life to be saved from being assimilated into something bigger, however superior that may be to itself.

What then is to be the end of such sectional movements? Nothing more or less than this, that the consciousness of the dignity of separate individuality will impel man to accept suffering for the sake of becoming greater; and true greatness can only be achieved by each section of mankind finding its field of self-realization in the great world of man. Only then can be attained real Unity, harmonious in structure, and therefore permanent. The artificial consolidation of the mangled in spirit, the crippled in life, the dependent and the hard-pressed, can only remain a jumble of incongruent parts.

At the period of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, we experienced a desire to make the Moslems one with ourselves, but we did not succeed in doing so. Doubtless a coalition with them would have been very convenient for us, but it is not enough that a thing should be convenient for it to be feasible. If there are differences between Hindu and Moslem which are real, they cannot be spirited away by any jugglery. If, in our anxiety to secure some convenience, we ignore the facts, the facts will ignore our convenience. We failed because the invitation which we extended to the Moslems was for serving a purpose, not because it was inevitable, as is the invitation of mutual good feeling in common service.

True, in the immediate past, the consciousness of differences in the two communities was not obtrusively strong. Both of us then lived as neighbours under conditions which did not tend to bring out our divergence so acutely as to make us aware of it to the degree of active opposition. But, after all, the lack of consciousness, whether of differences or anything else, does not point to any superiority in our former circumstances; it merely shows that something then was wanting in ourselves, namely, vigour of life. Along with the arousing of our political aspiration, the movement of Hindu revivalism was started as a protest against the western influence on our life and mind. When, with the new age, the Hindu rose to a sense of the dignity of his Hinduism, if the Moslem had simply acquiesced therein, that would doubtless have suited us admirably; but the same causes likewise roused the Moslem to a sense of the dignity of Islam.

What is disconcerting in this circumstance is the fact that, while it lasts, peace between the two sections of the population can only be had either through apathy and forgetfulness, or through fear of foreign rule and common hatred against it. They may form an alliance for some such immediate object of mutual self-interest; but these alliances, like political alliances

between countries which have traditions of antagonism, are not only transitory, but in constant danger of ending in violent re-action. For, the bond which depends upon some special expectation, either becomes a menace at the slightest sign of disappointment, or ceases to exist when that expectation is fulfilled. The most difficult problem for India is, that both Hindus and Mahomedans, when they reach the full consciousness of their individuality, become, in the natural course of things as they exist today, mutually exclusive and antagonistic.

There must be something radically wrong in our mental and social life when such can be the case. It must be the result of some narrowness of vision, some distrust of human nature in its universal aspect, which distracts our sympathy from the great course of its development that is to comprehend all humanity.

Individuality is precious, because only through it we can realize the universal. If it were a prison-house to shut us in for ever within a strictly circumscribed range of truth, devoid of movement or growth, then our existence itself would become an insult to us who have a living soul, just as a cage is to winged creatures. Unfortunately there are people who take enormous pride in magnifying their speciality and proclaiming to the world that they are fixed for ever on their pedestal of uniqueness. They forget that only discords are unique and therefore can claim their own separate place outside the universal world of music.

It should be the function of religion to provide us with this universal ideal of truth and maintain it in its purity. But men have often made perverse use of their religion, building with it permanent walls to ensure their own separateness. In the region of worldly interest, our individual boundaries, in spite of their strength, are adjustable; they are ever changing their lines of demarcation. A man who, in the natural course of things, is a stranger to me may establish intimate kinship with me tomorrow; one who has been my enemy may become my best friend in time. But if we use religion itself for the delimitation of our mutual relationships, then these boundaries become rigidly unalterable.

Religion must only deal with things that belong to the spiritual realm of the eternal, and with sentiments that are self-luminous, carrying their ultimate value in themselves. It should allow a great part of human existence to lie outside its direct interference, so that life may enjoy its freedom of growth guided by laws of reason, or rhythm of beauty. The guidance of reason constantly varies its course, in its perpetual process of adjustment with unforeseen circumstances; its scope is ever being widened by contact with new data. But if religion, which is to give us emancipation in the realm of the infinite, tries also to usurp the place of reason in the world of the finite, then it brings about utter stagnation and sterility.

There was a time in the middle age in Europe when religion acted like a wall surrounding the whole life of the people. We know how it tried to keep its sway over the western world through persecution, excommunication and

even suppression of science. By the sheer vigour of their intellect the western people have broken through this imprisonment of their mind and have achieved in their life a freedom which makes it possible for them to approach and receive truth in its various phases and forms.

Intercourse between men is not merely external its deepest channel is through the freedom of mind. When religion instead of emancipating mind, fetters it within the narrow confinement of creeds and conventions, then it becomes the greatest barrier against a true meeting of races. Christianity, when it minimises its spiritual truth which is universal and emphasises its dogmatic side which is a mere accretion of time has the same effect of creating a mental obstruction which leads to the misunderstanding of people who are outside its pale. A great deal of the unmerited contempt and cruelty, which the non-western peoples have suffered in their political, commercial or other relations at the hands of the West, is owing to sectarian calumnies with which even the western children's text books are contaminated. Nevertheless this sectarian religion does not occupy the greater part of the western life and therefore in its heart still remains the possibility of a better human relationship than what prevails now between the races.

We have seen Europe cruelly unscrupulous in its politics and commerce, widely spreading slavery over the face of the earth in various names and forms. And yet, in this very same Europe, protest is always alive against its own iniquities. Martyrs are never absent whose lives of sacrifice are the penance for the wrongs done by their own kindred. The individuality which is western is not to be designated by any sect-name of a particular religion, but is distinguished by its eager attitude towards truth, in two of its aspects, scientific and humanistic. This openness of mind to Truth has also its moral value and so in the West it has often been noticed that, while those who are professedly pious have sided with tyrannical power, encouraging repression of freedom, the men of intellect, the sceptics, have bravely stood for justice and the rights of man.

I do not mean to say that those who seek truth always find truth, and we know that men in the West are apt to borrow the sanction of science under false pretences to give expression to their passions and prejudices. To many thinkers there has appeared a clear connection between Darwin's theories and the 'imperialism', Teutonic and other, which was so marked a feature during the 'sixties. We have also read western authors who, admirably mimicking scientific mannerism, assert that only the so-called Nordic race has the proper quality and therefore the right to rule the world, extolling its characteristic ruthlessness as giving it the claim to universal dominance. But we must not forget that such aberrations of science, padded with wrong or imperfect data, will be knocked down by science itself. The stream of water in a river does carry sand, but so long as the stream is fluent it will push away that sand from its own path. If the mental attitude is right we need not be afraid of mistakes. That is why the individual in the West has no unsurpassable barrier between himself and the rest of humanity. He may have his prejudices,

but no irrational injunctions to keep him in internment away from the wide world of men.

A Mahomedan is defined by his religion. But a religion does not consist merely in its spiritual essence; a great deal of it is formal, the outcome of special historical circumstances. All things that constitute mere forms of religion are exclusive,—no man belonging to a different creed can claim them as his own. These are, therefore, fences that separate; and are, moreover, constant causes of conflict so long as they are more valued than the essential truths of religion. Therefore the people who are chiefly recognised by their religion, whose behaviour and intellect itself is dominated by the externals of that religion, must find it difficult to establish channels of intimate relationship with neighbours belonging to a different religion.

Men often are unreasonable, but their unreason is as fluid in character as life itself; it is constantly mitigated by experience and education. But when religion stands against reason in the region which by right belongs to the latter, then it becomes a fixed screen of darkness against all communication of light. Truth finds no permanent antagonism in our passion or stupidity, just as sunshine is not perpetually obstructed by mist. But when religion, with its own material and authority, builds a barricade against truth, then woe to the men who bend their knees to such a power, terrible because it is the power of light that has blinded itself.

On the other side, a Hindu also is known by his speciality, which is not so much his religion as his social conventions. A Mahomedan is comparatively free in matters of his personal life, as to his food, companionship or occupation. Therefore he has more freedom of opportunity in the choice of his vocation than an orthodox Hindu. A narrow range of vocation not only curtails for men their field of livelihood, but also limits their chance of coming into close touch with others in the active pursuit of common objects. Surrounded in his personal life by prohibitions of all kinds about the most insignificant details of his daily career, an orthodox Hindu lives insulated in the confinement of his conventional solitary cell. His is a world which has its one gate of entrance, the gate of birth, though those of departure are innumerable. The strict code of Hinduism is, in every way, inhospitable to the world at large, which cannot but re-act upon the mind of the orthodox Hindu by narrowing and deadening his human interest, detracting from his power of forming great combinations.

We have to realize this in India, and know that the religion, chiefly based upon a fixed code of custom, which we have allowed to fasten upon the entire region of our life, has been the one radical cause of the separateness of our races, and has made the cracks from which comes out the poisonous gas of degeneracy. The problem of untouchability is merely one of the numerous symptoms of this fatal malady. By suppressing these through external means we do not cure the disease. The thorny bushes of evil are overspreading our social soil, made barren by the obsession of a religion that insults reason. Uprooting a few of these will not help us in improving the soil, the impoverishment of which is the real origin of our futility.

Civilization is that which gives individuals the best facility to deal with the greatest number of human beings in the noblest spirit of truth. Unfortunately for India, the latter development of Hinduism has been the product of a history of re-action. It represents the most powerfully organized effort of a people, not only to withdraw itself from contact with the larger world, but also to separate its own component parts so that they become out of touch with each other. The greater portion of the world is branded by it with impurity. Defilement is waiting for it at every turn, against which its only security is the strict system of segregation built up by itself. In order to build this effectively, it has not been content with forbidding its members to cross the sea, but has nearly obliterated from its annals and literature all mention of foreign contact. For, though from Greek, Tibetan, Chinese and other sources we find materials for that great period of India's history when her influence transcended her geographical limits and spread civilization over peoples completely alien to her own children, we find no mention in the Indian scriptures about what those outside countries were to her. So much so, that all the records of the greatest of India's sons were banished for centuries from her memory, till they were brought back to her by foreigners. The mentality produced by such a contemptuous ignoring of the world outside her own immediate surroundings, still persists in the life and culture of India's people.

No doubt, in all parts of the world we have such restrictions of narrowness, under different names. Societies in all countries have their irrational conventions and traditions that have outlived their original meaning, clogging the path of human intercourse with incongruities. Everywhere such social holes and ditches are the breeding places of moral disease and callousness of heart. The spirit of nationalism itself in the West is another such confinement, which raises a barrier against the large human world and gives rise to degeneracy of soul. How, in the end, it becomes disastrous to its own cause, has been proved in the frank brutality of the late War, and perhaps more so in the sinister manoeuvres of the Peace conferences.

I know how reluctant it makes us feel to give any credit for humanity to the western civilization when we observe the brutalities into which this nationalism of theirs breaks out, instances of which are so numerous all the world over,—in the late war, in the lynching of negroes, in cowardly outrages allowed to be committed by European soldiers upon helpless Indians, in the rapacity and vandalism practised in Peking during the Boxer war by the very people who are never tired of vulgarly applying the epithet of Hun to one section of their own confederates. But while I have never sought to gloss over or keep out of mind any of these ugly phenomena, I still aver that in the life of the West they have a large tract where their mind is free; whence the circulation of their thought currents can surround the world. This freedom of the mind's ventilation constantly bears in it the promise of righting the wrong and purifying the noxious accumulation within.

The latter-day orthodox Hinduism of our country, on the other hand, though free from militant aggressiveness, is even more fatal in its effects on its

own votaries, for it has to kill the mind first in order to make it possible for human beings to accept such deprivation of freedom and outrage on dignity as are entailed by its prohibitions and exactions. Accustomed as we are to it, we may not feel the humiliation of such restriction of life and mind, or may even glorify it in our blind pride; but in these days, when we are talking about nation-building and the uniting of the different Indian races, we must know that Hindus and Mahomedans can never effect any real union until we can cast off the shackles of our non-essentials, and free our mind from the grip of unmeaning dead tradition.

To me the mere political necessity is unimportant; it is for the sake of our humanity, for the full growth of our soul, that we must turn our mind towards the ideal of the spiritual unity of man. We must use our social strength, not to guard ourselves against the touch of others, considering it as contamination, but generously to extend hospitality to the world, taking all its risks however numerous and grave. We must manfully accept the responsibility of moral freedom, which disdains to barricade itself within dead formulae of external regulation, timidly seeking its security in utter stagnation. For, men who live in dread of the spirit of enquiry and lack courage to launch out in the adventure of truth, can never achieve freedom in any department of life. Freedom is not for those who are not lovers of freedom and who only allow it standing space in the porter's vestibule for the sake of some temporary purpose, while worshipping, in the inner shrine of their life, the spirit of blind obedience.

In India what is needed more than anything else, is the broad mind which, only because it is conscious of its own vigorous individuality, is not afraid of accepting truth from all sources. Fortunately for us we know what such a mind has meant in an individual who belongs to modern India. I speak of Rammohan Roy. He was thoroughly oriental in his early training and did not study English till he was of mature age. He was a profound scholar of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and he learnt Hebrew in order to study the Old Testament in its original oriental setting. He knew more of Sanskrit scriptures and Indian philosophy than any contemporary pandit. His learning, because of its depth and comprehensiveness, did not merely furnish him with materials for scholarship, but trained his mind for the free acceptance of truth. Rammohan Roy developed the courage and capacity to discriminate between things that are essential and those that are non-essential in the culture which was his by inheritance. This helped him to realise that, truth can never be foreign, that money and material may exclusively belong to the particular country which produces them, but not knowledge, or ideas, or immortal forms of art.

The spirit of orthodox Hinduism is not modern, because it is fixed in the past,—the present age does not exist for it, and therefore it goes on missing its future. Rammohan Roy received from the storehouse of his country's past, things that were living. Therefore the future for him had its reality. For, life has its growth, which means that it perpetually carries its future in its own past

and present; in other words, its present is a bridge between its past and its future. Rammohan was typically modern, because in his life and work he not only built such a bridge between the past and the future of his own country, but between India and the rest of the world.

The very magnitude of mind of such men becomes almost a grievance for smaller personalities, and Rammohan has been misunderstood by his own countrymen because he had in him this modern spirit of freedom and comprehensive grasp of truth. We must, however, never make the mistake that those great men who are belittled by their contemporary compatriots do not represent their countries; for, countries are not always true to themselves.

Giordano Bruno more truly represented the spirit of the intellectual probity of Europe than the Europe herself of that period which killed him. The Judea which held her god to be the god of a chosen people did not clearly know her own ideal; her truth was represented by the prophets who realized the Kingdom of God in the unbounded realm of humanity. The true life of India has been obscured by the night which overtook her and the slightest glimmer of light on her eastern horizon is more her own than the vast darkness which contradicts it. The India which keeps her religion shackled in chains of dead custom that refuse to be responsible to reason or to conscience, is *maya,*—she reveals her soul only there, where her seers have declared that religion recognises no external bond.

We have often seen in human history that at the very time and place where facts appear overwhelming in their congregated attack against the dignity of man, there appears the prophet who discovers some sovereign truth which raises its head above the rebellious turmoil. And because in India the heterogeneity of races is a most overbearing fact that has produced such incoherence of mind, such division in life, making our present problems seem well-nigh insoluble, there is a strong hope that in the India of to-day will be evolved some great spiritual guidance which will lead her to an enlightened future across irrational dogmas, or nationalistic cults. For, obstacles are like blocks of marble with which those who are artists amongst men fashion the best living images of truth.

In Rammohan Roy's life we find a concrete illustration of what India seeks, the true indication of her goal. Thoroughly steeped in the best culture of his country, he was capable of finding himself at home in the larger world. His culture was not for rejection of those cultures which came from foreign sources, on the contrary, it had an uncommon power of sympathy which could adjust itself to them with respectful receptiveness. His mind had a natural reverence for Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge,—for the Truth, whose dwelling is in the hundred-petalled lotus-heart of humanity. It is an utter lack of reverence for truth which, in the name of Patriotism, can ignore the grand quest of man for knowledge because, for the time being, its field of activity happens to be in the West. And I must strenuously maintain that such irreverence is not in harmony with the spirit of our land.

The ideal I have formed of the culture which should be universal in India,

has become clear to me from the life of Rammohan Roy. I have come to feel that the mind, which has been matured in the atmosphere of a profound knowledge of its own country and of the perfect thoughts that have been produced in that land, is ready to accept and assimilate the cultures that come from foreign countries. He who has no wealth of his own can only beg, and those who are compelled to follow the profession of beggary at the gate of the intellectually rich may gain occasional scraps of mental food, but they are sure to lose the strength of their intellectual character and their minds are doomed to become timid in thought and in creative endeavour.

All this time we have been receiving education on purely western lines. When this first began, western culture was imbued with a supreme contempt for that of the East. And to this day, consequently, we have been brought up in this contempt. This speaks of internal dissensions within the temple of Mother Saraswati. Her eastern sons kept closed the door leading to the western side for fear of adulteration, and her western sons barred their eastern windows through want of respect. Meanwhile the system of education in India remained, and still remains, absurdly un-Indian, making no adequate provision for our own culture. We have, here, not even anything like the facility which the German student enjoys in Germany, for the study of the lore of Hindu and Moslem. And if we have become conscious of this vital deficiency in our education, that is because of the spirit of the times.

A certain number of us do not admit that our culture has any special features of value. These good people I leave out of account. But the number of those others is not few, who while admitting this value in theory, ignore it more or less in practice. Very often, the flourishing of the banner of this culture is not for the sake of the love of truth but for that of national vaingloriousness,—like brandishing a musical instrument in athletic display before one's own admiring family, instead of using it to make music.

This section of our people while never neglecting to make proud boast of their country's glory, have an absurdly narrow conception of the ideal in which that glory consists. Their indiscriminate reverence is for the actual, not for the eternal. The habits and customs of our decadence which have set up barriers between us and the world, splitting us into mutually exclusive sections, making us weak and bowing our heads in shame at every turn of our later history,—these are the idols of their special worship, which they endow with endless virtues of their own imagining. They consider it to be their sacred mission to retain in perpetuity the waste matter sloughed off by age, as the true insignia of our Hindu civilization; to extol the gleam of the will-o-the-wisp, born of the noxious miasma of decay, as more time-hallowed than the light of sun, moon and stars.

Up to now we have not been submitting our own scriptures to the same critical, historical and scientific tests to which we are accustomed in the case of western lore. As if, everywhere else in the world, the normality of universal law prevails, but the door is barred to it in India, whose history, forsooth, has no beginning and is altogether beyond the province of science! Some god is

responsible for its grammar, another for its chemistry, a third for its science of medicine. Everything in this wonderland has been set going, once for all, by the co-operation of gods and sages. What critic can be allowed to pry too curiously into an arrangement of such perfection? That is why even our educated men do not feel any qualms in counting our miraculous myths as integral parts of our history.

Therefore it is reckoned as a sin to enquire into the why and wherefore of what we do as Hindus. The ordinary laws of cause and effect cannot be taken into consideration in the India of the Infallibles, where the injunctions of the *shastras* are the one cause of all action. So when we debate whether sea-voyage is good or bad, we have to look into our scriptures to find the reply; and if we want to know whether the presence of a particular person in the room will contaminate the water in our vessels, we must go to a pandit for the solution. If we dare to question why the caste, which may handle our milk or our molasses, may not come near our water, or why foreign food should destroy our caste while foreign strong drink apparently does not, our mouths may be stopped, in more senses than one, by a stoppage of all supplies.

It seems to me that one reason for the persistence of these absurdities, even in our educated circles, is, that we reserve western science and method only for our school hours, while the current traditions and beliefs are imbibed at other times when, with our school dress, we have likewise doffed the school habit of precise thinking. They are kept in separate compartments, and so never come to a mutual understanding. Thus it is no matter of difficulty for us to believe that only in our class lessons we need to be rational; for the rest, if we be but grammatical, that is enough.

In our greed for immediate political result, we are apt to ascribe the fact of our tendency towards separateness to accidental circumstances, refusing to see that a code of behaviour, which has not the sanction of reason, and yet has the support of religion, must result in the creation of irreconcileable divisions between men. In reason alone can we have our common meeting ground; for that which is against reason needs must be peculiar and exclusive, offering constant friction until worn away by the ever-active, rational mind of man. So when, for a body of men, popular custom is artificially protected by a religion which is allowed to usurp the entire range of human knowledge and conduct, it becomes a potent factor in maintaining an immense gap of aloofness and antagonism between closest neighbours.

The evolving Hindu social ideal has never been present to us as a whole, so that we have only a vague conception of what the Hindu has achieved in the past, or can attempt in the future. The partial view, before us at any moment, appears at the time to be the most important, so we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that it is this very aspect which, not only hides from us the true ideal, but tends to destroy it. And we have thus come to imagine a picture of the Hindu Samaj continually bathing, fasting and telling beads, emaciated with doing penance, shrinking into a corner away from the rest of the world.

We forget that Hindu civilization was once very much alive, crossing the

seas, planting colonies, giving to and taking from all the world. It had its arts, its commerce, its vast and strenuous field of work. In its history, new ideas had their scope, social and religious revolutions their opportunity. Its women also, had their learning, their bravery, their place in the civic life. In every page of the Mahābhārata we shall find proofs that it was no rigid, cast-iron type of civilization. The men of those days did not, like marionettes, play the same set piece over and over again. They progressed through mistakes, made discoveries through experiment, and gained truth through striving. They belonged to a free and varied *samāj*, quick with life, driven into ever new enterprise by its active vigour.

This, however, was a society which orthodoxy to-day would hardly recognise as Hindu, because it was living and had a growth which was revealing its inner unity through outer changes. So the *dharma* of life which thinks and doubts, accepts and rejects, progresses, changes and evolves, cannot, according to orthodoxy, be a part of the Hindu Dharma. Man shows his mental feebleness when he loses his faith in life because it is difficult to govern, and is only willing to take the responsibility of the dead because they are content to lie still under an elaborately decorated tomb-stone of his own make. We must know that life carries its own weight, while the burden of the dead is heavy to bear,—an intolerable burden which has been pressing upon our country for ages. Can we really believe that with this incubus of social inertness on our bowed back we can cross the pathless wilderness and succeed in reaching the hill-top of political independence?

The fact stands out clearly to-day that the Divinity dwelling within the heart of man cannot be kept immured any longer in the darkness of particular temples. The day of the *Ratha-yātrā*, the Car Festival, has arrived when He shall come out on the highway of the world, into the thick of the joys and sorrows, the mutual commerce, of the throng of men. Each of us must set to work to build such car as we can, to take its place in the grand procession. The material of some may be of value, of others cheap. Some may break down on the way, others last till the end. But the day has come at last when all the cars must set out.

I feel proud that I have been born in this great age. I know that it must take time before we can adjust our minds to a condition which is not only new, but almost exactly the opposite of the old. Let us not imagine the death struggle of the doomed to be a sign of life. Let us announce to the world that the light of the morning has come, not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers, but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation; never for nourishing a spirit of rejection, but for that glad acceptance which constantly carries in itself the giving out of the best that we have.

1923

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

When I was about to start for my tour in China and Japan there was an enthusiastic meeting in Calcutta, where my countrymen came together to express their joy at my taking this journey to the great Eastern countries. I felt with a sense of delight that the consciousness of kinship was waxing stronger among our people and that its growth might lead to a great future for Asia.

My friends who came to wish me happy times on these shores, asked me also to convey to your country their feelings of love and respect for you. They also requested me to ask you to rise above circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, and to prove the dignity of Eastern mind. They are all waiting to see a great Renaissance in Asia through Japan, where life is at its floodtide, and they wish she would wake up to the great responsibility she has, not only to her own people, but to the great continent to which she belongs.

At the same time, they wanted me to offer to your people their heartfelt sympathy for the disaster[1] which has so suddenly overtaken your country. I am sure that the calamities over which you have no hand came to prove your manhood, and are in themselves an opportunity. Disasters only become absolutely disastrous when we know not how to deal with them.

Now that I have come to Japan, I realize with what courage you have accepted your tribulation. I see no sign of despair in your faces; I see that you have within yourselves that indomitable resourcefulness which will help you to make good the loss. I do not mean that they will merely make your position stronger even than before; but the fact that you are able to face misfortune of such an overwhelming nature in the right spirit will gain for you greater prestige among other nations, and give you a firmer confidence in your own power.

All great civilizations are built upon numberless ruins—the toppled-down towers of victory and wealth. It is only human beings in this world of life who have found their greatness through the desperate urgings of unfavourable circumstances. Humanity has never been pampered, petted and spoilt by Nature, but rather respected by being given constant opportunity to overcome the obstacles of failures and losses. I believe that what has now happened to you, and has brought your gathered resources of years to the dust in a moment, will inspire you to make a better beginning for a more vigorous experiment. You will realize that the people's life, like a waterfall, finds its full force of movement through courageous leaps from peak to peak of new trials.

This earthquake has only been the cause of physical upset for you, but unfortunately, closely following this, you have also received lately a rude moral shock in your national relations with another people, and this has deeply hurt your people, even more than the former which was only physical, because it has come with deliberate purpose from human hands. And yet what I expect

[1] The great earthquake of 1923.

to see among your people at this time of crisis is the same dignity of calm and patient fortitude.

You are on your trial to-day. The eyes of all nations are upon you in this calamity. Great tribulations in our history should never fail to give us the occasion to bring out the best resources of our life, so as not only to reveal them to the outer world, but—and this is more valuable—to reveal them to ourselves. If to-day you can discover some hidden source of magnanimity with which to face the insult and injury, if you can keep the majesty of your mind unimpaired, then you will be happy, and future generations will be thankful to you.

You have discovered one thing, that this earthquake, though but physical, and therefore causing you only material loss, has yet a great similarity to the disturbance of your relations with a Western country;[1] for, the latter is also external, having in it no acknowledgment of moral law. Any relationship which had a moral value would have been stronger than before at this time of suffering. But your relationship, as it was, was precarious. Any little event would have proved its hollowness. This was inevitable because it was not based upon the comradeship of human hearts. It had for its basis a sense of mere expediency, that lacked the frankness of youth and had the calculating spirit of senility. It was a treacherously shifting base upon which you could never have built your best hopes.

It is unfortunate that such disillusionment always gives rise to our baser passions. We feel angry and vengeful and eager to retaliate. Only then it becomes a complete defeat. Is it right that you, along with your political defeat, should accept moral defeat? I hope that your people, through your spiritual generosity, through your true pride of civilization and through that sense of hospitality which has been your birthright for centuries, will exercise your mind that has been trained and gifted with a wonderful self-control.

I should deplore very deeply the appearance of any sign of decay in these great traits of character that you possess. This is the time when you can bring out of your store all the wealth of moral heroism that you have inherited from your forefathers. This is the time to put to shame those others who have treated you in this unchivalrous manner, showing that their profession of friendship was all the while waiting for your weak moment, shamelessly to contradict itself. I do not think that any symptom of political hysteria on your part is at all seemly at this time, or in accordance with your national tradition.

If we find you indulging just now in vulgar boisterousness, we shall know that it is weakness, which you have borrowed through those importers of moral drugs from abroad. We have been schooled in the West, where they have become hypnotized by the sight of open and public expressions of vengefulness, the modern version of the naked war-dance of the savage. I hope that you will be saved from this. Real suicide it would be, if you were to forget your own true character and the fact that there is a kind of death far worse than physical death itself.

[1] America: the reference is to the anti-Japanese emigration laws of the United States.

In the East, we have had the courage to have faith even in impossible ideals. You all know that it was a prophet of the East who could say, 'Love your enemies.' You know, too, of another prophet of the East who could say, 'Conquer anger by non-anger and evil by goodness.' There are those in the West who have accepted these teachings in their churches and yet who feel extremely nervous when they are reminded of them, when they find that such teaching is commercially unprofitable and politically inconvenient. Some of our friends here, who have studied Indian history, will tell you how these ideals have been pursued and believed in, and how men went to extreme lengths of non-killing, of non-violence, and of non-anger.

You have perhaps also learnt from the newspapers how a prophet[1] has arisen in India, who has likewise proclaimed that you have to conquer violence by non-violence. He speaks like a prophet of the East and insists that what has been translated into the Bible of the West must not only be pursued in the personal lives of individuals but must be given the best possible expression in our national lives.

Perhaps most of you will not accept this teaching—you will not be able to apply it to your national life. I understand your misgivings and sympathize with you in your want of faith. But let us discuss this point.

There was a time when our lives were simpler, when the spirit of the people was hospitable. This spirit has been overcome by the spirit of the Nation, with its intense consciousness of self-interest concentrated in political organization. Such an unlimited cultivation of over-consciousness of self by the whole people must inevitably produce its harvest of suspicion, hatred and inhospitable exclusiveness. And, therefore, if you have been rudely treated by a nation, and abruptly hustled out whenever it has been safe for it to disclose its moral crudity, there is no cause for surprise. It is of no use to be angry either against the earthquake, or against such eruptions of moral catastrophe, which are inevitable when this phenomenon that we term the Nation is rampant.

To be just and fair, you have to acknowledge that you also have been unjust and grasping where your nation has had a safe opportunity to manifest its evil aspect. I have a deep love and respect for you as a people, but when as a nation you also can be deceptive, cruel and efficient in handling those methods in which the Western nations show such mastery. You must not plume yourselves that when you are suffering from smallpox your skin and temperature behave better than those of other people who have the same malady.

Let us consider how this demoniacal power of the Nation has arisen. The nature of the people depends for its manifestation upon its creative personality. It has religion, arts, literature, traditions of social responsibility and co-operation. Its wealth to maintain itself and power of defence are secondary; they are not the ultimate ends for the people. But the Nation manifests itself in its property. The people represent life, the nation materials; when they are in harmony, that is to say, when material possessions keep to their own limits

[1] Mahatma Gandhi.

and the creative life is unhampered in its spontaneous activity, then civilization is hospitable and generous. This being the case in the olden times it was possible for India to find her home in the heart of China and Japan, and your administrators did not busy themselves to find out if some groups of idealists, freed from barriers of passport offices, were finding access to the heart of your country, instead of into its goals with police spies at their heels.

But when material possessions become too vast for a people, or when in competition with others the desire for material wealth rouses its ambition, then all its time and mind are occupied with very little else. The man who is a 'millionaire' is dragged by the very weight of his millions to the path of the multitude of millions. Then he has no time for culture, or for the poetry of life; he strictly barricades himself against visitors whom he cannot but suspect to be self-seekers, being selfish in his own outlook upon life. In other words he becomes professional, and the human in him is banished into the shade.

Since Nature's storehouse of power and wealth has been opened by the help of science, some people who know how to take advantage of it have suddenly grown enormously rich and others are incited to follow their example. The people who were human, who were creative and social in their self-expression, have become professional, enormously self-centred and anti-social in their tendency of mind. Material wealth and power, with their very bulk, have occupied the greater part of the space, time and mind of the people, necessitating a tremendous expense of thought and resources for ensuring their safety.

Material possessions create the worst divisions in human society when they are disproportionately big and naturally unmindful of moral responsiblity. Therefore the Nation, the presiding genius of the material department of the people, cannot but be hard and exclusive. And in the modern age this department has become the most proudly domineering of all other manifestations of human society. It has made the craving for money universal and has given the name of Progress to the raising of the material standard of living.

We all know how those who are immoderately rich suffer from a sense of class distinction; how money, which is a dead thing, acts as an impenetrable wall around their self-imprisonment. Within this dungeon of illusion they are proud of their segregation. This process is going on not only with individuals, but with the prosperous nations. And it is just these prosperous nations which become most suspicious of idealism, which barricade their doors with spies, police and prohibitions in order to safeguard their citadel of wealth, where the human spirit languishes and where there is no touch of life.

Such nations are doomed and they carry the curse of God in their money-bags. They will die in the very enclosures which they have built for themselves—enclosures of wealth, of high walls of national distinction impenetrable for others. Yet these are the people who once professed faith in a man, and even accepted him to be their God, who said it was easier for a camel to pass through the needle's eye than for the rich to find access to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of Heaven is here on this earth. It is there, where we realize our best relations with our fellow-beings, where there is no mutual suspicion and misunderstanding—there is the Kingdom of Heaven, in the spirit of comradeship and love. Christ was right when He said that the path to such a Kingdom is closed for him who thinks more of his money than of his soul, more of his soul, more of his personal right than of his human responsibility. Now that the whole human world has surrendered itself to the lure of money and power, the severance of human relationship is everywhere becoming evident and the fight between classes is spreading wide.

If you must have peace you will have to fight the spirit of this demon, the Nation. You may think it hopeless, but do you not realize that its first appearance was not so long ago, not more than two centuries; that it has not the sign of immortality upon it, that already it is tottering towards its downfall? You must know that if we cling to this sinking ship we also shall be drowned.

Let me appeal to your imagination. If we could go back into the distant past, we would know of facts that are not in histories. We would know that groups of men grew into great peoples through overcoming a feeling of distrust and cultivating sympathy for each other. It was not at all easy; for our passions are individualistic, our selfishness immensely strong. And yet the impossible has been attained in some societies. A system of discipline has been established, the sentiments of sympathy cultivated, and the ferocious savage has been tamed on a wholesale scale. We must also know that those who went on indulging in their selfish isolation perished.

Suppose that the idealists had been there in those days, and that they had had the courage to speak to those who still believed in robbery and muscular brutality and to warn them that they would never form great nations, do you think that they would have been listened to? They would promptly have been eaten up!

In the early history of life in this world, with its display of stupendous bodily bulk and strength, when puny man first appeared on this earth, could his final victory have been predicated by the logic of appearances? In the same manner, it is apparently unbelievable today that only those who can overcome the egoistic sense of nationalism, who can develop the understanding of sympathy that pierces through barriers of race differences, who have the enduring strength of meekness, will inherit the earth; and not those who are imagined to be born rulers of men.

Often have my Western friends almost sneeringly said to me that we in the East have no faith in Democracy, and thereupon they have asserted the superiority of their own mind over ours. Not being combative, I did not want to argue the matter and contradict them in their deep-rooted illusion. I know that in our part of the world we have some people who, as being of noble descent, are considered aristocrats, and enjoy special rights. My Western friends believe that they have no such anomalies in their part of the world.

Be that as it may, one thing they must admit, that because our aristocracy is restricted to a narrow circle, the rest of the people have the true democratic

spirit, which is the spirit of the community. About one thing there can be no difference of opinion, that we never had an aristocracy of the whole people, like this monstrous aristocracy so proud of its European blood, which has no pity for others who are darker in colour, for those Asiatics and Africans who can be exploited with impunity, as the common people used to be exploited in France before the revolution broke out.

These monster aristocrats consider us to be plebeian because we are of another continent. While loudly protesting their democracy, they extort false evidence from a make-believe science to prove their race superiority and their right to inherit the earth. These aristocrats of monstrous girth and open jaws are out to feast upon the life-blood of peoples whom they have dubbed ignoble, who are expected to feel grateful for providing comfort to the Nordic race with their own extinction. They assert their race aristocracy, not merely through their home-made science, but through the coercion of darker continents to slavery by the shattering argument of bombs. Today, they are almost openly ready to drop their pretensions to moral culture; but nevertheless they cling to their two illusions, the one of the Nordic race, and the other of Democracy.

We, who do not profess democracy, acknowledge our human obligations and have faith in our code of honour. But are you also going to allow yourselves to be tempted by the contagion of this belief in your own hungry right of inborn superiority, bearing the false name of democracy? Leave the unreality of these professions; hold up to us something which is your very own and not mere imitation. Do you not see how this malady of imitation is rapidly spreading from shore to shore, from nation to nation? It has the same monotony of features, in its offices, barracks, dress and manners, its attitude of mind. Every people in this world is vying with its neighbour to copy it, because being non-living it is easy to copy indefinitely. It is a mask that can be precisely similar in its multiplication, not a face which has spontaneous variety of self-expression.

But the mask can easily smother the living individuality of the face. That is what is happening everywhere in the world—the monotony of the nation killing the individuality of the people. The stone pavement, which can be made in the same stereotyped plan everywhere, deprives the soil of its unique personality of flowers and harvest. Through this deadening influence even your arts and crafts, all the delicate idioms of expression in your life and surroundings, are fast losing their own living character and stiffening into the standardized convention made in a foreign world. The Nation makes this mould, which may be useful; but we cannot afford to pay its cost with the inspiration of creative life, which is inherent in living peoples.

It is the people in the Western countries that have produced its literature, its art, its music and dance; it is the spirit of the people that spoke through the voice of the great dramatists and artists of Greece, through the voice of Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe; it is the soul of your people which reigns in your homes, giving them a profound quiet of beauty, in the dignified self-control

of your behaviour, in the combination of usefulness and grace in all things that you produce, in your inimitable paintings and dramatic performances.

But what are these products of the Nation—the machinery of destruction and profit-making, the double-dealings of diplomacy—in the face of which moral obligation lies defeated and the spirit of human brotherhood destroyed? You have been tempted, or perhaps almost compelled, to accept them; and we in India are envying you, ready for ourselves to accept as much of them as comes our way. The cruelty and meanness of lies and exaggeration and the greed of self-seeking are creeping up over that soil on which were born those great sages who preached *maitri* and self-emancipation.

Whenever the spirit of the Nation has come it has destroyed sympathy and beauty, and driven out the generous obligations of human relationship from the hearts of men. It has spread the ugliness of its cities and its markets into the minds and enthroned the demon of deformity in the hearts of men. Though today it dominates the spirit of man everywhere in the world, it will die like the worm which lies in the heart of the fruit that it has devoured. It will die; but unfortunately it may meanwhile destroy things of unrivalled worth, the products of centuries of self-control and spiritual training.

I have come to warn you in Japan—the country where I wrote my first lectures against Nationalism at a time when people laughed my ideas to scorn. They thought that I did not know the meaning of the word, and accused me of having confused the word Nation with State. But I stuck to my conviction, and now after the war do you not hear everywhere the denunciation of this spirit of the Nation, this collective egoism of the people, which is universally hardening their hearts?

I have come once again to remind you. I hope to be able to meet individuals in this country who have the courage of faith needed to bring about a great future. Let Japan find her own true mind, which will not merely accept lessons from others, but will create a world of her own, which will be generous of its gifts to all humanity. Make all other peoples of Asia proud in their acknowledgment of your greatness, which is not based upon the enslavement of victims, upon the accumulation of material wealth exclusively for your own enjoyment—wealth which is not accepted by man for all time and is rejected by God.

1924

THE INDO-IRANIANS

Pods burst, and winged seeds are borne away by the winds to distant soils where, in combination with new environments, variations are produced, and nature, full of creative curiosity, is given opportunity for making new experiments. In the history of man, such experiments have been made with races, driven by some ethnic storm, who reached lands far away from their original habitation, different in climate and surroundings.

The Indo-Iranian people, like a great river, started on their nomad career from their now-forgotten land of birth, in some obscure dawn of history. At last the current of emigration divided into two streams, one finding its destination in the west of the Hindukush, and the other pouring into the plains of India through some gap in its mountain barrier. There are vague records of a conflict of creeds in the Aryan race even before it had bifurcated into its Iranian and Indian branches. And both these communities carried away with them the seeds of that conflict which afterwards had their different stages of development in their respective soils.

The two people, though racially one, were placed in environments which were greatly different. The Iranians had for their neighbours the western races of Asia, who, in the main, were their equals both in physical features and mental gifts; and so they were never faced with the multifarious moral and spiritual problems resulting from colour distinction and from conflicting contact with races most of whom were inferior to them in culture. But such were the conditions which their destiny imposed upon the Aryans who came to India. There is also another fact, which distinguishes the Indian Aryans from all other branches of this race: it is that they were the one people who evolved a civilization of a high order in a country which is tropical in climate.

That such difference of circumstances and surroundings should produce different characteristics in brother communities, separated for long centuries, is only what can be expected.There are scholars, who have taken up the task of comparing these two peoples, dwelling only on the contrast which they present in their ideals. But certainly it is of equal if not greater importance to trace some underlying strand of unity in their development of mind, owing to their common race. That their growth of life should take opposite directions reaching to absolute contradiction, cannot be natural; and history, as far as it can be accurately traced, does not point in that direction.

The most important of all outstanding facts of Iranian history is the religious reform brought about by Zarathushtra. There can be hardly any question, that he was the first man we know who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion, and at the same time preached the doctrine of monotheism which offered an eternal foundation of reality to goodness as an ideal of perfection. All the religions of the primitive type try to keep men bound with regulations of external observances. These, no doubt, have the hypnotic effect of vaguely suggesting a realm of right and wrong, but

the dimness of light produces phantasms, leaving men to aberrations. Zarathushtra was the greatest of all the pioneer prophets who showed the path of freedom to man, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from the blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, freedom from the multiplicity of shrines which distract our worship from the single-minded chastity of devotion.

To most of us, it sounds like a truism to-day when we are told that the moral goodness of a deed comes from the goodness of intention. But it is a truth which once came to man like a revelation of light in the darkness, and has not yet reached all the obscure corners of humanity. We still see around us men who fearfully follow, hoping thereby to gain merit, the path of blind formalism, which has no living moral source in the mind. This will make us understand the greatness of Zarathushtra. Though surrounded by believers in magical rites, he proclaimed in those dark days of unreason that religion has its truth in its moral significance, not in external practices of imaginary value; that its value is in upholding man in his life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

'That prophet,' say Dr. Geiger, 'qualifies his religion as 'unheard of words' (Yasna 31.1) or as a 'mystery' (Y. 48.3) because he himself regards it as a religion quite distinct from the belief of the people hitherto. The revelation he announces, is to him no longer a matter of sentiment, no longer a merely undefined presentiment and conception of the Godhead, but a matter of intellect, of spiritual perception and knowledge. This is of great importance; for there are probably not many religions of so high antiquity in which this fundamental doctrine, that religion is a knowledge or learning, a science of what is true, is so precisely declared as in the tenets of the Gathas. It is the unbelieving that are unknowing; on the contrary, the believing are learned, because they have penetrated into this knowledge.' (Y. 30.3)

We may incidentally mention here, as showing the parallel to this in the development of Indian religious thought, that all through the Upanishad, spiritual truth is termed with a repeated emphasis—*vidyā*, knowledge, which has for its opposite—*avidyā*, acceptance of error, born of unreason.

The outer expression of truth reaches its white light of simplicity through its inner realization. True simplicity is the physiognomy of perfection. In the primitive stage of spiritual growth, when man is dimly aware of the mystery of the infinite in his life and the world, when he does not fully know the inward character of his relationship with this truth, his first feeling is either of dread, or of greed of gain. This drives him into wild exaggeration in worship, frenzied convulsions of ceremonialism. But in Zarathushtra's teachings, which are best reflected in his Gathas, we have hardly any mention of the ritualism of worship. Conduct and its moral motives, such as *Vohumano*, *Asha* and *Aramaiti*, have there received almost the sole attention.

The orthodox Persian form of worship in ancient Iran included animal sacrifices and offering of *haoma* to the *daevas*. That all these should be discountenanced by Zarathushtra, not only shows his courage, but the strength of his realization of the Supreme Being as spirit. We are told that it has been

mentioned by Plutarch, that 'Zarathushtra taught the Persians to sacrifice to Ahura Mazda 'vows and thanks-givings'.' The distance between faith in the efficacy of the bloodstained magical rites, and cultivation of the moral and spiritual ideals as the true form of worship, is immense. It is amazing to see how Zarathushtra was the first among men who crossed this distance with a certainty of realization which imparted such a fervour of faith to his life and his words. The truth which filled his mind was not a thing which he borrowed from books, or received from teachers; he did not come to it by following a prescribed path of tradition, but it came to him as an illumination of his entire life, almost like a communication to his personal self, and he proclaimed this utmost immediacy of his knowledge when he said:

When I conceived of Thee, O Mazda, as the very First and the Last, as the most Adorable One, as the Father of Good Thought, as the Creator of Truth and Right, as the Lord Judge of our actions in life, then I made a place for Thee in my very eyes. Yasna 31.8. (translation D. J. Irani).

It was the direct stirring of his soul which made him say:

Thus do I announce the Greatest of all! I weave my songs of praise for him through Truth, helpful and beneficent of all that live. Let Ahura Mazda listen to them with His Holy Spirit, for the Good Mind instructed me to adore Him; by his Wisdom let Him teach me about what is best. Yasna 45.6. (D. J. Irani.)

The truth, which is not reached through the analytical process of reasoning, and does not depend for proof on some corroboration of outward facts or the prevalent faith and practice of the people,—the truth, which comes like an inspiration, out of context with its surroundings, brings with it an assurance that it has been sent from a divine source of wisdom, that the individual who has received it is specially chosen and therefore has his responsibility as the messenger of God. Zarathushtra felt this sacredness of his mission and believed himself to be the direct medium of communication of Divine Truth.

So long as man deals with his God as the dispenser of benefits only to those of His worshippers who know the secret of propitiating Him, he tries to keep Him for his own self or for the tribe to which he belongs. But directly the moral or spiritual nature of God is apprehended, this knowledge is thrown open to all humanity; and then the idea of God, which first gives unity only to a special people, transcends limitations of race, and gathers together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union. Zarathushtra was the first prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of the tribal God, the God of a chosen people, and offered it to the universal man. This is a great fact in the history of religion. The Master said, when the enlightenment came to him:

Verily, I believed Thee, O Ahura Mazda, to be the Supreme Benevolent Providence, when Sraosha came to me with the Good Mind, when first I received and became wise with Thy words! And though the task be difficult, though woe may come to me, I shall proclaim to all mankind Thy message, which Thou declarest to be the best. Y. 43.11. (D. J. Irani.)

He prays to Mazda:

This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura, the religion that is best for all mankind, the religion, which based on truth, should prosper all that is ours, the religion which establishes our actions in order and justice by the Divine songs of Perfect Piety, which has for its intelligent desire of desires, the desire for Thee, O Mazda! Y. 444.10. (D. J. Irani.)

With the undoubted assurance and hope of one who has got a direct vision of Truth he speaks to the world:

Harken unto me, Ye, who come from near and from far! Listen, for I shall speak forth now; ponder well over all things weigh my words with care and clear thought. Never shall the false teacher destroy this world for a second time, for his tongue stands mute, his creed exposed. Y. 45.1. (D. J. Irani.)

I think it can be said without doubt that such a high conception of religion, uttered in such a clear note of affirmation, with a sure conviction that it is a truth of the ultimate ideal of perfection which must be revealed to all humanity, even at the cost of martyrdom, is unique in the history of any religion belonging to such a remote dawn of civilization.

There was a time when, along with other Aryan peoples, the Persians also worshipped the elemental gods of nature, whose favour was not to be won by any moral duty performed, or service of love. That, in fact, was the crude beginning of the scientific spirit trying to unlock the hidden sources of power in nature. But through it all there must have been some current of deeper desire, which constantly contradicted the cult of power and indicated a world of inner good, infinitely more precious than material gain. Its voice was not strong at first, nor was it heeded by the majority of the people, but its influence, like the life within the seed, was silently working.

Then comes the great teacher; and in his life and mind the hidden fire of truth suddenly bursts out into flame. The best in the people works for long obscure ages in hints and whispers, till it finds its voice which can never again be silenced. For that voice becomes the voice of man, no longer confined to a particular time or people. It works across intervals of silence and oblivion, depression and defeat, and comes out again and again with its conquering call. It is a call to the fighter, the fighter against untruth, against all that lures away man's spirit from its high mission of freedom into the meshes of materialism.

Zarathushtra's voice is still a living voice,—not alone a matter of academic interest for historical scholars who deal with the dead facts of the past; nor merely the guide of a small community of men in the daily details of their life. Rather, of all Teachers, Zarathushtra was the first who addressed his words to all humanity, regardless of distance of space or time. He was not like a cave-dweller who, by some chance of friction had lighted a lamp, and, fearing lest it could not be shared with all, secured it with a miser's care for his own domestic use. But he was the Watcher in the night, who stood on the lonely peak facing the East and broke out singing the poems of light to the sleeping world when the sun came out on the brim of the horizon. The Sun of Truth is for all, he declared,—its light is to unite the far and the near. Such a message always arouses the antagonism of those whose habits have become nocturnal,

whose vested interest is in the darkness. And there was a bitter fight in the life time of the prophet between his followers and the others who were addicted to the ceremonies that had tradition on their side, and not truth.

I have said, in the beginning of this paper, that there are indications of a conflict of creed in the Indo-Iranian race, whose seeds were carried away by the two sections into which it was divided. It is a remarkable fact that the Indian Aryans had, among their nature gods, some who represented the moral ideals of man. I can do nothing better than quote from a discussion on the subject by Professor Carnoy of Louvain University. He says:

The religious situation in the other branch of the Aryans, as it is described in the Vedas, shows striking similarities to the Iranian one. There the cult of the Indo-European elemental deities is at the basis of Vedic religion, where the power of the gods and their continuous action in the thorough natural phenomena provide us with an exuberant mythology, but, among the deities the group of the *Aditya* occupies a very special position and stands eminently for the maintenance of the moral law, reproducing to a great extent the characteristics of Ahura Mazda.

Here also there is a triad. Instead of Mazda, Mithra, and Anahita, we find Varuna, Mitra and Aryaman. The last member of the triad is different; instead of a goddess of fertilising waters we have a beneficent and healing deity, essentially helpful to man, and invoked at times as the dispenser of beneficent waters. The identity of the first two members on the other hand, is hardly questionable. In India as well as in Iran the eye of Mitra is the sun, with which he is watching over human tribes. His activity is expressed by the verb *vat*, which is also used for the payment of debts (in Rigveda, II.ii. 4, he and Varuna are mentioned as the gods who make men pay their debts). He is the god of contracts and pledges. Those who do not abide by their pledged word are sinning against him, like the *Mithro-druj*, 'breaker of contract', in Iran.

The original identity between Varuna and Mazda is generally accepted. Varuna is the most exalted deity of the Veda. As it was the will of Mazda that had made Darius a King, it is Varuna's will or command that rules the world. He is the *dhritavrata*, he whose commands are firm and immutable. His will often identified with *rita*, the *asha* or *arta* of the Iranians, which is the great law of the world, moral and material, the principle of all order, causing the sun to rise, rain to fall, rivers to flow, fire to come out of the rubbed sticks (*ritajan agni*) and imposing on man the moral obligations of justice, truth and piety. If man be guilty of rebellion against the *rita*, he becomes loaded with the chains of Varuna and has to pray him to be released from his fetters and obtain the freedom of innocence (*aditi*).

Here the author quotes from the Rigveda the prayer of Sunahshepa to Varuna. "Sunahshepa bound to three pillars, invokes thee, O, Aditya, O Varuna, O King, release him .... May our prayer and our sacrifice release us from thy wrath, of thee who are the King, wise Asura, release us from the chains of the sins which we have committed. May Varuna make loose my chain .... May we then follow thy path and go to Aditi'.

It has been said that the great Asura, Varuna, like an evening star, attained his place in the Vedic worship at an early time, and then losing his distinction disappeared in the nebulae of the Indian nature deities. In the Rigveda we find prayers directly addressed to him asking to be forgiven for transgressions:

However we break thy laws from day to day, men as we are, O God Varuna, do not deliver us unto death, nor to the blow of the furious, nor to the anger of the spiteful.

But we also find the worshipper afraid of Varuna's immutable law of retribution asking Indra to stand between his wrath and the sinner:

On the days when evil men do penance for their sin, on these days be gracious to us, O Indra; the sins which Varuna the wise god, sees in us, from their guilt may Indra deliver us.

There is a curious passage in Chāndogya Upanishat in which the different sound qualities of the hymns associated with different gods are mentioned with appreciation, excepting that of Varuna which is described as ill-sounding, giving, as it were, a hint to the people that the hymn to Varuna must be shunned. It seems from this that the worshippers of the *Devas*, like a band of light-hearted school children, in their awe of the mysterious idea of sin, tried to play the truant by altogether ignoring Varuna in their rituals.

Then came the time when Indra, representing wealth and power, attained the predominant position in the Vedic Pantheon and Varuna, representing the ideal of righteousness, occupied a subordinate place. In our epics there is no mention of Varuna's having any guiding influence in human affairs, while Indra appears as constantly active in modifying events of history and destinies of individuals. His activities had hardly any moral meaning; they were mostly capricious, and often immoral, like those of his prototype in the Greek mythology.

While admitting all this, I cannot think that the moral principle which was once enthroned in the Indian ideal of Divinity could vanish altogether without even a struggle. There can be no doubt that all through the development of ancient Indian Religion the conflict between the two opposing principles remained active. The history of this struggle remains vague and contradictory, because the later Indian chroniclers represent an age of priestly supremacy in Indian society. As we find in all historical writings obsessed by some political or religious propaganda, the later compilation of legends and historical records in India affords evident traces of suppression and distortion of facts, slurring over of important events and putting wrong emphasis on others. There is no doubt, that we in India had our own special Publicity Department, which had its usual function of selecting and arranging facts according to its particular purpose, thus muddling the memory of the people and inscribing on it impressions that are incorrect. Yet, through all such obscuration of truth and lapses of racial remembrance, glimpses are seen which show that there were deadly combats between the representatives of two different ideals, such as we find in Iran in the time of Zarathushtra.

We are told that 'Zarathushtra was descended from a kingly family' and

also that the first converts to his doctrine were of the ruling caste. But the priesthood, 'the Kavis, and the Karapans, often succeeded in bringing the rulers over to their side.' So we find that, in this fight, the princes of the land divided themselves into two opposite parties as we find in India in the Kurukshetra War. 'With the princes have the Kavis and the Karapans united,'—so complains the holy singer (Yasna 46.II.)—'in order to corrupt man by their evil deeds.' Among the princes that stood against Zarathushtra as his enemies, the mighty Bendva is to be included, who is mentioned in Yasna 49.I-2. From the context of the passages we can of course conclude that he stood on the side of the infidels. A family or a race of princely blood were probably the Gremma (Y. 32. 12-14.) Regarding them it is said that 'they, allied with the Kavis and the Karapans, have established their power in order to over-power the prophet and his partisans.' In fact, the opposition between the pious and the impious, the believers and the unbelievers, seems very often to have led to open combat. The prophet prays to Ahura that he may grant victory to his own, when both the armies rush together in combat, whereby they can cause defeat among the wicked, and procure for them grief and trouble.

There is evidence in our legends that in ancient India there also have been fights between the representatives of the orthodox faith and the Kshatriyas, who owing to their own special vocation, had a comparative freedom of mind about the religion of external observances. The proofs are strong enough to lead us to believe that the monotheistic religious movement had its origin and principal support in the kingly caste of those days, though a great number of them also fought to oppose it.

I have discussed at length in another paper the growth in ancient India of the moral and spiritual element in her religion, which had accompanied the Indian Aryan people from the time of the Indo-Iranian age, showing how the struggle with its antagonistic force has continued all through the history of India. I have shown how the revolution which accompanied the teachings of Zarathushtra, breaking out into severe fights, had its close analogy in the religious revolution in India whose ideals are still preserved in the Bhagavadgita.

It has been a matter of supreme satisfaction to me to realize, that the Iranian and the Indian Aryans, who sprang from the same parent source, are not contradictory in their natures like light and darkness. Both of them were faced by the same great problem, the distraction of unrelated heterogeneity, which so deeply hurts our spiritual nature; both of them have undergone the struggle to attain simplicity of devotion, the infinity of the One. The purification of faith which was the mission of the great teachers in both communities followed a similar line. We have already seen how Zarathushtra spiritualised the meaning of sacrifice, which in former days consisted in external ritualism entailing bloodshed. The same thing we find in the Gita, in which the meaning of the word *Yajña* has been translated into a higher significance than it had in its crude form.

According to the Gita, the deeds that are done solely for the sake of self fetter our soul; the disinterested action, performed for the sake of the giving

up of self, is the true sacrifice. For creation itself comes of the self-sacrifice of Brahma, which has no other purpose; and therefore, in our performance of the duty which is self sacrificing, we realize the spirit of Brahma.

It is interesting to note that the growth of the same ideal in the same race in different geographical situations has produced results, that, in spite of their unity, have certain aspects of difference. The Iranian monotheism is more ethical, while the Indian is more metaphysical, in character. Such a difference in their respective spiritual developments was owing, no doubt, to the active vigour of will in the old Persians and the contemplative quietude of mind in the Indians. This distinction in the latter arises out of the climatic conditions of the country, the easy fertility of the 'soil and the great stretch of plains in Northern India which offered no constant physical obstacles to be daily overcome by man.'

The Zoroastrian ideal has accepted the challenge of the principle of evil, which is the negative pole of existence, and has enlisted itself in the fight on the side of Ahura Mazda, the great, the good, the wise. In India, although the ethical side is not absent, the emphasis has been more strongly laid on subjective realization through a stoical suppression of desire, and the attainment of a perfect equanimity of mind by cultivating indifference to all causes of joy and sorrow. Here the idea, over which the minds of men brooded for ages in an introspective intensity of silence, was that man as a spiritual being has to realize his truth by breaking through his sheath of self. All the desires and the feelings that limit his being are keeping him shut in from the region of spiritual freedom. In man, the spirit of creation is waiting to find its ultimate release in an ineffable illumination of Truth.

The aspiration of India is for attaining the infinite in the spirit of man. On the other hand, as we have seen, the ideal of Zoroastrian Persia is distinctly ethical. It sends its call to men to work together with the Eternal Spirit of Good in spreading and maintaining *Kshathra*, the kingdom of righteousness, against all attacks of evil. This ideal gives us our place as collaborators with God in distributing his blessings over the world.

> Clear is this to the man of wisdom as to the man who carefully thinks:
> He who upholds Truth with all the might of his power,
> He who upholds Truth the utmost in his word and deed
> He, indeed, is thy most valued helper, O Mazda Ahura!
>
> Y. 31.22. (*D.J. Irani.*)

It is a fact of supreme moment to us, that the human world is in an incessant state of war between that which will save us and that which will drag us into the abyss of disaster. Our one hope lies in the fact, that Ahura Mazda is on our side if we choose the right course. The law of warfare is severe in its character; it allows no compromise. 'None of you,' says Zarathushtra, 'shall mind the doctrine and precepts of the wicked; because thereby he will bring grief and death in his house and village, in his land and people! No, grip your sword and cut them down!' (Y. 31. 18).

Such relentless attitude of fight reminds us of the Old Testament spirit. The active heroic aspect of this religion reflects the character of the people themselves, who later on spread their conquests far and wide and built up great empires by the might of their sword. They accepted this world in all seriousness. They had their zest in life and confidence in their own strength. They belonged to the western half of Asia and their great influence travelled through the neighbouring civilization of Judea towards the Western Continent. Their ideal was the ideal of the fighter. By force of will and deeds of sacrifice they were to conquer *haurvatat*—welfare in this world, and *ameratat*—immortality in the other. This is the best ideal of the West, the great truth of fight. For paradise has to be gained through conquest. That sacred task is for the heroes, who are to take the right side in the battle, and the right weapons.

There was a heroic period in Indian history, when this holy spirit of fight was invoked by the greatest poet of the Sanskrit Literature. It is not to be wondered at that his ideal of fight was similar to the ideal that Zarathushtra preached. The problem with which his poem starts is that paradise has to be rescued by the hero from its invasion by the evil beings. This is the eternal problem of man. The evil spirit is exultant and paradise is lost when *Sati*, the Spirit of *Sat* (Reality), is disunited from *Siva*, the Spirit of Goodness. The Real and the Good must meet in wedlock if the hero is to take his birth in order to save all that is true and beautiful. When the union was attempted through the agency of passion, the anger of God was aroused and the result was a tragedy of disappointment. At last, by purification through penance, the wedding was effected, the hero was born who fought against the forces of evil and paradise was regained. This is a poem of the ideal of the moral fight, whose first great prophet was Zarathushtra.

We must admit that this ideal has taken a stronger hold upon the life of man in the West, than in India,—the West, where the vigour of life receives its fullest support from Nature and the excess of energy finds its delight in ceaseless activities. But everywhere in the world, the unrealized ideal is a force of disaster. It gathers its strength in secret even in the heart of prosperity, kills the soul first and then drives men to their utter ruin. When the aggressive activity of will, which naturally accompanies physical vigour, fails to accept the responsibility of its ideal, it breeds unappeasable greed for material gain, leads to unmeaning slavery of things, till amidst a raging conflagration of clashing interests the tower of ambition topples down to the dust.

And for this, the prophetic voice of Zarathushtra reminds us that all human activities must have an ideal goal, which is an end to itself, and therefore is peace, is immortality. It is the House of Songs, the realization of love, which comes through strenuous service of goodness.

All the joys of life which thou holdest, O Mazda, the joys that were, the joys that are, and the joys that shall be, Thou dost apportion all in Thy love for us.

We, on the other hand, in the tropical East, who have no surplus of physical energy inevitably overflowing in outer activities, also have our own ideal given to us. Our course is, not so much through the constant readiness

to fight in the battle of the good and evil, as through the inner concentration of mind, through pacifying the turbulence of desire, to reach that serenity of the infinite in our being which leads to the harmony with the all. Here, likewise, the unrealized ideal pursues us with its malediction. As the activities of a vigorous vitality may become unmeaning, and thereupon smother the soul with a mere multiplicity of material, so the peace of the extinguished desire may become the peace of death; and the inner world, in which we would dwell, become a world of incoherent dreams.

The river whose current is checked, is choked by its own accumulation. The negative process of curbing desire and controlling passion is only for saving our energy from dissipation and directing it into its proper channel. If the path of the channel we have chosen runs withinwards, it also must have its expression in action, not for any ulterior reward, but for the proving of its own truth. If the test of action is removed, if our realization grows purely subjective, then it may become like travelling in a desert in the night, going round and round the same circle, imagining all the while that we are following the straight path of progress.

This is why the prophet of the Gita, in the first place, says;

Whoso forsaketh all desires and goeth onwards free from yearnings, selfless and without egoism, he goeth to peace.

But he does not stop here, he adds:

Surrendering all actions to Me, with thy thoughts resting on the Supreme Self, from hope and egoism freed, and of mental fever cured, engage in battle.

Action there must be, fight we must have,—not the fight of passion and desire, of arrogant self-assertion, but of duty done in the presence of the Eternal, the disinterested fight of the serene soul that helps us in our union with the Supreme Being.

In this, the teaching of Zarathushtra, his sacred gospel of fight, finds its unitiy. The end of the fight he preaches is in the House of Songs; in the symphony of spiritual union. He sings:

Ye, who wish to be allied to the Good Mind, to be friend with Truth, Ye, who desire to sustain the Holy Cause, down with all anger and violence, away with all ill-will and strife! Such benevolent men, O Mazda, I shall take to the House of Songs!

In concluding my paper I have to confess that I am not a scholar; the detailed facts of history, which are the battle ground of the learned, are not my province. I am a singer myself, and I am ever attracted by the strains that come forth from the House of Songs. When the streams of ideals that flow from the East and from the West mingle their murmur in some profound harmony of meaning it delights my soul.

In the realm of material property men are jealously proud of their possessions and their exclusive rights. Unfortunately there are quarrelsome men who bring that pride of acquisition, the worldliness of sectarianism, even into the region of spiritual truth. Would it be sane, if the man in China should lay claim to ownership of the sun because he can prove the earlier sunrise in his own country?

For myself, I feel proud whenever I find that the truth which dwells in the best thoughts of India has also been uttered in a different language, in a different part of the world. The best in the world have their fundamental agreement because they are pure in truth. And therefore it is their function to unite; and dissuade the small from bristling up, like prickly shrubs, in the pride of the minute points of their differences, only to hurt one another.

It rejoices my heart to know, that the peoples who once had nourished their seeds of civilization together and blended their voices in an original mother tongue which belonged to them both, should, even after their long period of separation, have kept some primal similarity of expression in the growth of their respective histories. For we find that both of these peoples have carried in the depth of their nature the quest of the spiritual unity in religion.

Zarathushtra arose as the herald of that mission in Western Asia. He revealed to his people the idea of the One in the midst of the chaos of formal worship. It is the same genius of race in Persia which gave birth to the great Sufi poets who sang of the nearness of God in a language of intimacy, defiantly giving a shock to the dignity of distance upheld by the orthodox creed of Godhead. That this spiritual quest in that people is not dead, is proved by the later rise of Bahaism, crowned with martyrdom, which preaches the federation of man in the Kingdom of Supreme Truth. It is needless to describe in detail how in India also the same quest has been running its course through the wilderness of obstacles which the heterogeneity of race and creed offers to her.

In India, the disunited kinsmen have met over and over again. The Persian monarchs extended their kingdom to the Western Provinces of India, and the dim recollection of their blood relationship came to the Indian mind when in the Purāṇas they were recognized as the Kshatriyas who had fallen off from their orthodox rites. For nearly two centuries a part of North-Western India was a Persian Province. That Iran and India had a very early connection can be guessed by some Greek allusion to the custom of the dead being left to be devoured by vultures in the locality of Taxila, at the time of Alexander the Great.

It was not merely an extension of kingdom; the proofs are numerous that the Persians had also extended their influence over the Indian arts. The scholars agree that in the later development of the Mahāyāna Buddhism the Zoroastrian influence is unquestionable. It has to be noted that it was a Persian King who accepted Buddhism for his religion and was the first to take this religion to China, translating Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. That the Persian influence affected Hinduism also has been discussed by Sir Charles Eliot, in his book named 'Hinduism and Buddhism', from which I quote the following:

The Brihatsamhitā says, that the Magas,—that is the Magi,—are the priests of the sun, and the proper persons to superintend the consecration of temples and images dedicated to that deity, but the clearest statements about this foreign cult are to be found in the Bhavishya Purāṇa, as to its introduction

obviously based upon history. By the advice of Gurmukha, priest of King Ugrasena, he imported some Magas from Sakadvipa. That this refers to the importation of Zoroastrian priests from the country of the Sakas (Persia, or the Oxus region) is made clear by the account of their customs,—such as the wearing of a girdle called Avyanga (the Aivyaonghen of the Avesta)—given by the Purāṇa. It also says that they were descended from a child of the sun, called Jarasabda, or Jarasasta, which no doubt represents Zarathushtra.

At last, in a later age, the disciples of Zarathushtra took their shelter in India, the meeting ground of races and cultures in the East. They have brought with them a new store of energy and adventurous spirit into this land, giving, in spite of the smallness of their number, a strong impetus to our national life, opening up the industrial resources of this country, bravely standing up for its rights, and generously helping in the cause of its welfare. This courage of fight, this cheerful spirit of work and active benevolence, they owe to the teaching of their great prophet, whose benediction rings in these words (*D. J. Irani*):

Happiness be the lot of him, who works
for others' happiness.
May the Supreme Lord give him the powers
of health and strength!
For the struggle to uphold Truth, I beseech
these gifts from Thee, O Lord.

1923

NOTES AND COMMENTS

It struck my heart with dismay, when I visited Ceylon, to find that the people there have lost the consciousness of their unity with their Indian kinsmen. Not having in their mind a continental background for their culture and aspiration, they have permitted their intellectual and spiritual individuality to miss its shelter, and easily to drift into the vagabondage of imitation.

They seem to have forgotten that political division is merely a division of property through which we can change our residence, but not our brotherhood.

When the mouth of the branch of a great river is choked up, the branch becomes reduced to a stagnant pool; the pulsation of the ocean heart no longer reaches it, nor the living message that flows from the hoary height of the inaccessible. A community, cut off from its parent stem by disastrous oblivion, is sure to forget the great meaning of its own personality, and thus to fall a prey to the force of other personalities and be bent and clipped and hammered by them to their purposes. A tree grows in its own shape and finds its fulfillment, but when cut off from its root it is, as timber, at the mercy of the dealers who turn it into toys of their fancy.

Life is original; it is adventurous; it seeks itself in endless experiments, the outcome of its spontaneous creative impulse. The people, who passively lend themselves to imitation, prove that life has lost its best claim on their hearts. It is the temptation of *Māra*, the evil spirit of Untruth, which whispers to us that we can be better than we are by seeming to be something else.

Thus we yield ourselves to being slowly robbed of the best gift given to us by God,—the dignity of our individual existence with its infinite possibilities of creation. We must never allow this to happen on either side of the water that divides this island of Ceylon from India.

Our subconscious self has the accumulation of ages of creative memory, wherein has grown in secret the racial genius which creates. The whole current of a people's history generates its own special energy of guidance in this region lying beneath the surface-consciousness of our mind. This is why, when we try to imitate some other people's history, we remain so pathetically unaware of the absurdities that are produced.

There can be no doubt that Ceylon's subconscious mind, its racial mind, has unbroken connection with that of India; the language which she speaks has all the subtle modulations, her physical organism all the characteristic gestures, that belong to it. When her conscious self tries to ignore this, and attaches itself to some alien mentality, then its progress, like that of a three-legged race in which legs belonging to different individuals are tied together, takes on a gait which is neither efficient, nor graceful.

All our efforts which are unmixed imitations are lame, for in them our conscious will ignores the co-operation of its great partner, our fundamental personality, which nevertheless goes on working in the subsoil of our con-

sciousness. History, properly studied, saves us from these unrhythmic strivings which go contrary to the direction of our inmost nature; and Ceylon, if she would do herself justice, must acknowledge that her intellectual and spiritual history runs in one stream with the cultural history of India.

The great religion of the Buddha had once spread its living spirit of Unity over the greater part of Asia. It drew races together and turned their hope and faith away from the turmoil of self-seeking.

True, the modern facilities of science have also established human communication across geographical barriers; but in this, man has only utilised physical forces to overcome physical obstructions. Buddhism was the first spiritual force, known to us in history, which drew close together such a large number of races separated by most difficult barriers of distance, by differences of language and custom, by various degrees and divergent types of civilization. It had its motive power, neither in international commerce, nor in empire-building, nor in scientific curiosity, nor in a migratory impulse to occupy fresh territorv. It was a purely disinterested effort to help mankind forward to its final goal.

The religion, which flowed from the comprehensive mind of Buddha, has its negative aspect,—the control of passion and renunciation of self,—for purifying spiritual ideas and religious phraseology from all narrowness, anthropomorphic, or egotistic; it is the path of discipline through elimination. But this cannot be the whole of it; and that this has not been all, is amply proved by the direction and form which Buddhism has naturally taken in the greater part of the Buddhistic world.

A seed has, as a portion of its body, the sheath which is hard, which is for its protection; but it also has its kernel which grows, which takes it out of its obscurity and spreads its branches wide. The special aspect of Buddhism, that has grown and spread its branching life far away from its mother soil, that has subdued the savage in the races which were primitive, and inspired in them art and literature, must have been its religious nucleus, carrying in itself the vital principle of Buddha's teaching. This life force, which is the positive element in Buddhism, has neither been lost in India herself; it is still working in the heart of even her lattermost religions in various shapes.

I have lately been reading a book about Buddhism, written by one who professes this religion. Our Buddhist author has tried to prove, that though Buddhism had its origin in geographical India, neither did its seed come from the Indian culture, nor did its root draw sap from the Indian mind. In other words, he would make out that it was an accident, which had no previous history, no natural genesis in a continued line of ancestors. In his zeal, the author is acrimoniously violent in the assertion that Buddhism as a religion is absolutely contrary to whatever preceded it in the religious history of India.

The child in the very process of birth manifests an apparent antagonism to the mother. All the same, the birth can never be a repudiation of the parent. There can be no question that Buddhism was one of the great products of the mother-heart of India.

We are free to admit that after centuries of its domination there was, outwardly a violent reaction against it. But when the history of that period is thoroughly investigated, I have no doubt that it will be found that what was forcibly thrown out was no part of the original idea of Buddhism, but a medley of miscellaneous aberrations, interpolated mostly from the dense tangle of non-Aryan superstitions.

That which I value most in my religion or my aspiration, I seek to find corroborated, in its fundamental unity, in other great religions, or in the hopes expressed in the history of other peoples. Each great movement of thought and endeavour in any part of the world may have something unique in its expression, but the truth underlying any of them never has the meretricious cheapness of utter novelty about it. The great Ganges must not hesitate to declare its essential similarity to the Nile of Egypt, or to the Yangtse-Kiang of China. Only a water-spout displays a sudden arrogance of singularity and vanishes in the void, leaving mother Nature ashamed of so monstrous a production!

Whenever we find, in the immensity of the human mind the prototype of something which we hold most precious in ourselves, we should rejoice. The pride of special possession can cling only to those results of pot culture, which have merely market value. But great truths, like great monarchs of the forest, disdain to exhibit any extravagant speciality, which may offer temptation to those who are jealous of their proprietary right in rareness. The great is never alone; it has its aristocracy of the sublime, its common kinship of the immortal.

This is why, because I consider Buddhism to be one of the greatest religious achievements of man, I find a delight in discovering some of its essential similarities, not only to the spiritual thought of ancient India, but to that of other great religions as well. Is it right that we should have pride merely in some special production of man, but not in Man himself? Only those, who have no respect for humanity as a whole, can believe that Truth, in its supreme aspect, has been reached only once by one chosen people, leaving no alternative to others but to borrow from it, or else to live in utter spiritual destitution.

I cannot accept from anybody the statement, that Buddhism was a freak of human nature, and that as a religion, utterly unlike any other religion in the world, it is not only unrelated, but contradictory to its spiritual surroundings; that it is the science and art of self-extinction referring to a world where there is no true principle of unity anywhere, within man, or outside him.

Once again I assert that no religion whatsoever can for a moment stand on the basis of negation. It must have some great truth in its heart which is positive and eternal, and for whose sake Man can offer all that he has, and be glad. And, in this, Buddhism must have its inherent relation and resemblance to that spiritual endeavour in ancient India which led men to leave aside their material possessions and seek the fulfilment of their life.

And what is this truth which the Buddha preached, which is eternal? It

is Dharma, difficult to be rendered in English, Perhaps it may be translated as the 'highest ideal of perfection.' Certainly it is not a logical abstraction, nothing which is merely subjective. It is a reality which has to be reached, and according to the degree of our relationship with it, we attain the fulfilment of life. So this Dharma and the Brahma of our Upanishads are essentially the same, in regard to that which is supreme Reality.

The Buddhist Dharma does not consist in mere reason, blind and dark. It comprises within itself the highest spiritual enlightenment; it is eternally true for all beings; its laws are not restricted to any boundary of outward circumstances. Therefore it has the principle of reality, wisdom, and infinity. Likewise it has been said in the Upanishad :—SATYAM, JNANAM, ANANTAM BRAHMA, *Brahma is truth, wisdom, and eternity.* Then again, Dharma has not merely its reality, like the universal force of gravitation; it has its moral value, it leads us to peace, goodness and love. Similarly the Brahma of the Upanishad, who is SATYAM, is also SANTAM, SIVAM, ADVAITAM, which means that in Brahma is peace, goodness and union.

Dharma in Buddhism, or *Dharma Kāyā*, as it has been termed in some of the Buddhist scriptures, is an eternal reality of Peace, Goodness and Love, for which man can offer up the homage of his highest loyalty, his life itself. This Dharma can inspire man with almost superhuman power of renunciation, and through the abnegation of self, lead him to the supreme object of his existence, a state that cannot be compared to anything we know in this world; and yet of which we can at least have a dim idea, when we know that it is only to be reached, not through the path of annihilation, but through immeasurable love. Thus, to dwell in the constant consciousness of unbounded love is named by Lord Buddha: BRAHMA-VIHARA,—*moving in Brahma.*

However, let me not dwell too long on my own idea about the essential points of resemblance between the truths of Buddhism and the truths inculcated in the Upanishads. Those who want to indulge their sectarian pride by believing that they only are the fortunate people in the world, in possession of a religion absolutely solitary in its singularity, I shall leave to their exultation. But I cannot allow the historical link of Buddhism with India's mind to be ignored, and I must assert that the truest relationship among human beings is that of ideals; a relationship more real indeed than even the kinship of blood.

What is this Visva-Bharati, this international institution—I was asked to explain. It may not be out of place to reproduce in our journal the explanation which I gave of the Visva-Bharati ideal to my Ceylon audience.

The word 'international' may sound too indefinite,—its meaning appearing large only because of its vagueness, like water acquiring volume by turning into vapour. I do not believe in an internationalism which is amorphous, whose features are broadened into flatness. The internationalism of Visva-Bharati must be the internationalism of India, with its own distinct character.

The true universal finds its manifestation in the individuality which is

true. Beauty is universal, and a rose reveals it because, as a rose, it is individually beautiful. By making a decoction of a rose, jasmine and lotus, you do not get to a realization of some larger beauty which is interfloral. The true universalism is not the breaking down of the walls of one's own house, but the offering of hospitality to one's guests and neighbours.

Like the position of the earth in the course of its diurnal and annual motions, man's life, at any moment, must be the reconciliation of its two movements, one round the centre of its own personality, and another whose centre is in a luminous ideal comprehending the whole human world. The international endeavour of a people must carry the movement of the people's own personality round the great spirit of man. The inspiration must be its own, which is to help it in its aspiration towards fulfilment. Otherwise, mere cosmopolitanism but drifts on the waves, buffeted by wind from all quarters, in an imbecility of movement which has no progress.

One of the objects of Visva-Bharati is concerned with the personality of the people she represents,—to rescue this personality from the dimness of ignorance. As a people we must be fully conscious of what we are. It is a truism to say that the consciousness of the unity of a people implies a knowledge of its parts as well as of its whole. But, we not only have no such knowledge of India, we do not even have an eager desire to cultivate it.

By asserting our national unity with vehemence in our patriotic propaganda, we assure ourselves that we possess it, and thus continue to live in a make-believe world of political day-dreams. The greater part of Bengal's knowledge of the Punjab consists in its relative position upon the maps of India,—a mere outline of information of a dead kind. How many Bengalis are there, who have studied the message of Nanak that has come to us through the Sikhs? And are there students in the Punjab, who have tried to understand the Vaishnavism of Chaitanya, and what place it occupies in the religious culture of India? India is the one place in the world, where the science of Ethnology can be studied with the full advantage; and yet it has never aroused any enthusiasm in our students.

The fact is, we have a very feeble human interest in our own country. We love to talk about politics and economics; we are ready to soar into the thin air of academic abstractions, or to roam in the dusk of pedantic wildernesses; but we never care to cross our social boundaries and come to the door of our neighbouring communities, personally to inquire how they think and feel and express themselves, and how they fashion their lives.

The love of man has its own hunger for knowing. Even if we lack this concerning our fellow-beings in India, except in our political protestations, at least love of knowledge for its own sake could have brought us close to each other. But there also we have failed and have suffered. For weakness of knowledge is the foundation of weakness of power. Until India becomes fully distinct in our mind, we can never gain her in truth; and where truth is imperfect, love can never have its full sway. 'Know thyself,' for the giving of self

is waiting for that knowledge. One of the endeavours of Visva-Bharati is to help us to *know* ourselves; and then along with it, her other mission will be fulfilled which is to inspire us to *give* ourselves.

What has given such enormous intellectual power to Europe is her concentration of mind. She has evolved a means by which all the countries of that continent can think together. Such a great concert of ideas, by its own pressure of movement, naturally wears away all her individual aberrations of thought and extravagances of unreason. It keeps her flights of fancy close to the limits of reticence. All her different thought-rays have been focussed in one common culture, which finds its complete expression in all the great European universities.

The mind of India, on the other hand, is divided and scattered; there is no one common pathway along which we can reach it. Upto the present, in all our patriotic endeavours, our effort has been to establish our unity on the basis of our common interest in the political or economic situation. It is like gathering coals for our railway journey, while the locomotive is nowhere to be found!

So I must guard myself against the least chance of my audience carrying away the belief that Visva-Bharati bases its ideal upon any ulterior expectation, political or otherwise. Its one object is to help each student to realize his personality, as an individual representing his people, in such a broad spirit, in such an unobstructed sunshine of spiritual expansion of consciousness, that he may know how it is the most important fact of his life for him to have been born to the great world of man.

1924

THE FOURFOLD WAY OF INDIA

An artist carefully selects his lines and colours and harmonises them in such a manner that they no longer remain a sum total of lines and colours. They transcend themselves to form a picture in which the artist's ideal of perfection finds its release in a final attainment. Similarly, India in pursuit of her ideals of liberation, a liberation in the bosom of the Perfect, tried to train and manipulate life's forces towards a deliberate end. Life, according to her, must not only grow within itself but outgrow itself into a higher meaning which is beyond it, as the flower outgrows itself into the fruit. Lines through their discipline of limits lead the form to the region of beauty which is the expression of the Limitless. India's aim has been to guide life's current through its boundaries of banks towards an unbounded sea of freedom. The object of this paper is to discuss the principles and method of such an art of living which once India taught her children to follow.

The flesh is impure, the world is vanity, therefore renunciation in the shape of self-mortification is necessary for salvation,—this was the ideal of spiritual life held forth in mediaeval Europe. Modern Europe, however, considers it unwholesome to acknowledge an overlasting feud between the human world of natural desires and social aims on the one hand, and the spiritual life with its discipline and aspiration on the other. According to her, we enfeeble the moral purpose of our existence if we put too much stress on the illusoriness of this world. To drop down dead in the race course of life, while running at full speed, is acclaimed by her to be the most glorious death.

It is true that Europe has gained a certain strength by pinning its faith on the world, by refusing to dwell on its evanescence, on the certainty of death,—condemning the opposite frame of mind as morbid. Her children are, perhaps, thereby trained to be more efficient in competition, to gain victory in the struggle which, in their view, represents the whole of life. But, whatever may be the practical effect of leading this life as if its connection with us were interminable, that is not a fact.

Doubtless Nature, for its own biological purposes, has created in us a strong faith in life, by keeping us unmindful of death. Nevertheless, not only our physical existence, but also the environment which it builds up around itself, desert us in the moment of triumph. The greatest prosperity comes to its end, dissolving into emptiness; the mightiest empire is overtaken by stupor amidst the flicker of its festival lights. All this is none the less true because the truism bores us to be reminded of it. Therefore all our works which make for the composition of our life have to be judged according to their harmony with their background, the background which is death.

And yet, it is equally true that, though all our mortal relationships have their end, we cannot ignore them with impunity while they last. If we behave as if they do not exist, merely because they will not persist, they will all the same exact their dues, with a great deal over by, way of penalty. We cannot claim

exemption from payment of fare because the railway train has not the permanence of the dwelling house. Trying to ignore bonds that are real, albeit temporary, only strengthens and prolongs their bondage.

That is why the spirit of attachment and that of detachment have to be reconciled in harmony, and then only will they lead us to fulfilment. Attachment is the force which draws us to the truth in its finite aspect, the aspect of what is, while detachment leads us to freedom in the infinity of truth which is the ideal aspect. In the act of walking, attachment is in the step that the foot takes when it touches the earth; detachment is in the movement of the other foot when it raises itself. The harmony of bondage and freedom is the dance of creation. According to the symbolism of Indian thought, the god Siva, the male principle of Truth, represents freedom which is of the spirit, while the goddess Sivani, its female principle, represents the bonds, which are of the real. In their union dwells the ideal of perfection.

In order to achieve the reconciliation of these opposites, we must first come to a true understanding of man; that is to say, we must not cut him down to the requirement of any particular duty. To look on trees only as firewood, is not to know the tree in its completeness. Similarly, to look on man merely as the protector of his country, or the producer of its wealth, is to reduce him to soldier or merchant or diplomat, to make his efficiency as such the measure of his manhood. Not only is such a view limited, it is destructive. And those whom we would thus glorify are but assisted to a rocket-like descent.

How India once looked on man as greater than any purpose he could serve, is shown by the well-known couplet of a Sanskrit poet which may be translated thus: For the family, sacrifice the individual; for the community, the family; for the country, the community; for the soul, all the world.

A question will be asked; 'What is this soul?' Let us first try to answer a much simpler question; 'What is life?' Certainly life is not merely the facts of life that are evident to us, the breathing, digesting and various other functions of the body; not even the principle of unity which comprehends them. In a mysterious manner it contains within it a future which continually brings itself out from the envelopment of its present, dealing with unforeseen circumstances, experimenting with new variations. If its presence, with dead materials, chokes the path of its ever-unfolding future, then it is a traitor that betrays its trust. The soul, which is our spiritual life, contains our infinity within it. It has an impulse that urges our consciousness to break through the dimly lighted walls of animal life where our turbulent passions fight and scream to find their throne within that narrow enclosure. Though, like animals, man is dominated by his self, he has an instinct that fights against it, like the rebel life within a seed that breaks through the dark prison bringing out its flag of freedom in the realm of light. Our sages in the East have always maintained that self-emancipation is the highest form of freedom for man,—because it is his fulfilment in the heart of the Eternal, and not merely some reward achieved through some process of what is called salvation.

That was what had been preached and practised in India. Our sages saw

no end to the dignity of the human spirit which found its consummation in the Supreme Spirit itself. Any limited view of man would therefore be a false view. He could not be merely Citizen or Patriot, for neither city nor country, nor, for the matter of that, the bubble called the world, could contain his infinity.

A poet of classical India, who was once a King, has said: *What if you have secured the fountain-head of all desires; what if you have put your foot on the neck of your enemy, or by good fortune gathered friends around you; that, even, if you have succeeded in keeping mortal bodies alive for ages, what then?*

The realm of our desires is for the creature who is imprisoned within his self. These desires not having their perspective of the eternal have some fanciful value for which the prisoners scramble in the dark and bred each other's skulls. You can only direct man's life towards its perfection if you remind him that there is something for him which is ultimate and those who stop of that can never find the answer to the question: What then?

Europe is incessantly singing paeans to Freedom, which to her means freedom to acquire, freedom to enjoy, freedom to wish freedom is by no means a small thing, and much toil and care are required to maintain it in this world.

In the process of attaining freedom a man must bind his will in order to save its forces from distraction and wastage, so as to gain be it the velocity which comes from the bondage itself. Those who seek liberty in a political plane must constantly curtail it and reduce their freedom of thought and to that narrow limit which is necessary to making political liberty secure, very often at the cost of liberty of conscience. Are the soldiers of England free men, or are they of merely living guns? And what of the others in her mines and factories—mere bondage of the machines they work,—who assist with their life's blood to paint red the map of England's Empire. How few are the Englishmen who really participate in this political freedom of theirs? Europe may have preached and striven for the rights of the individual, but where else in the world is the individual so much of a slave?

The only reply to this is the paradox to which I have already referred. Freedom can only be attained through bonds of discipline, through sacrifice of personal inclination. Freedom is a profit which can only be gained if you lay out a commensurate capital of self-restriction.

Individualism was also the object of India's quest,—not of this narrow kind, however, for it stretched up towards self-emancipation,—so it tried to gain this larger individual freedom through every detail of life, every relation of family and society. And as in Europe her ideal of freedom has manifested itself in the full rigour of mechanical and military bonds, so the ideal of India found its expression in the strict regulation of the most intimate details of the daily life. If we fail to see the ideal behind and focus our view on its external manifestations which are of the present age, then indeed in India individual liberty appears most thoroughly fettered. It has happened over and over again in the history of man when the means have got the better of the end. It occurs

either when some passion like greed lures away our mind from the ideal end to the material means itself, making us blind to their relative value, or when through lassitude of spirit our endeavour falls short of its aim and takes pride in conforming to regulations that no longer have their meaning, that exact our sacrifices without giving us anything in return.

That is what has happened in our country. We still submit to the bondage of all kinds of social restrictions, but the emancipation which was the object is no longer in our view. So that if now the looker-on should come to the conclusion that the social system of India is only a device for keeping down its people by unmeaning prohibitions, we may get angry, but we shall find it difficult to give an effective contradiction.

It is not my object to lament our downfall. What I wish to point out is that India had originally accepted the bonds of her social system in order to transcend society, as the rider puts reins on his horse and stirrups on his own feet in order to ensure greater speed towards his goal. India knew that society was not the ultimate end of man, but through the mutual help and collective endeavour of individuals it was the best means of training him for and leading him to liberation. And her bonds were even more severe than those which Europe has imposed on herself. That was because an even greater freedom was in contemplation. Her present plight only shows that the deeper the lake, the more cavernous is its hollow when it has dried up.

The reconciliation of these opposite aspects of bondage and freedom, of the means and the end, is thus referred to in one of our sacred scriptures:

'In darkness are they who worship only the world, but in greater darkness they who worship the Infinite alone. He who accepts both, saves himself from death by the knowledge of the former, and by that of the latter attains immortality.'

That is to say, we must first have our fulness of worldly life before we can attain the Infinite. Desire must be yoked to work for the purpose of transcending both desire and work, and then only can union with the Supreme be thought of. The mere renunciation of the world does not entitle to immortality.

The same scripture says:

'Performing work in this world, must thou desire to live a hundred years. O man, no other way is open to thee. His work never absolutely attaches itself to man.'

A full life with full work can alone fulfil the destiny of man. When his worldly life is thus perfected, it comes to its natural end, and the fetters of work are loosened ana drop off.

In Europe we see only two divisions of man's worldly life—the period of training and that of work. It is like prolonging a straight line till, wearied, you drop off your brush. Such elongation of a straight line can never produce a picture; it can have no design; so it is unmeaning. Work is a process and cannot really be the end of anything; it must have some gain, some achievement, as its object. And yet Europe has omitted to put before man any definite goal in which its work may find its natural termination and gain its rest. To acquisi-

tion, whether of material or of knowledge, there is no limit. And European civilization puts all its emphasis on the progress of this cumulative acquisition forgetting that the best contribution which each individual can make to the progressive life of humanity is in the perfection of his own life. So their end comes in the middle of things; there is no game, but only the chase.

We, also, say that the desire is not exhausted, but rather increases, with the getting. How then is one to come to the end of work? The reply that India of old gave was, that there is an exception to this general rule, that there *is* a plane wherein getting does arrive at its terminus, whereto if we strive to attain, our work shall come to an end, and rest be ours. The Universe cannot be so madly conceived that desire should be an interminable singing with no song to which it can be completed.

India has not advised us to come to a sudden stop while work is in full swing. It is true that the unending procession of the world has gone on, through its ups and downs, from the beginning of creation till to-day; but it is equally obvious that each individual's connection therewith *does* get finished. Must he necessarily quit it without any sense of fulfilment? Had that been so, he would have been unfortunate indeed.

On the one hand, I represent in me an endless current of generations; with my life I add to its flow, I contribute as much as I can to its store of ever increasing experience of knowledge and possibilities of power. On the other hand, I represent the individual whose life has a beginning and end in itself and therefore who must find some ideal of perfection in that limited period of time. The unending stream can have no idea of completeness, its nature is movement. To remain for a moment its part and then to vanish means struggle and no realization. Those who say that the world is a humming top of absurdity which only hums and whirls for no reason whatever, should not preach their gospel of work and help this madness of movements. As in the heart of all things there is the impulse of unending progress, so there must also be the ideal of fulfilment which only gives meaning to all movements. Who is to realize it if not the individual? The movement which is in the finite has its claims from him, but the fulfilment which is in the infinite has also its call to him. When we respond to that call, then death does not come as an abrupt interruption to our world or reality. Directly we know the truth which is ultimate, we enter the realm of the everlasting yes.

In the division of man's world-life which we had in India, work came in the middle, the freedom at the end. As the day is divided into morning, noon afternoon and evening, so India has divided man's life into four parts, following the indication of his nature. The day has the waxing and waning of its light, so has man of his bodily powers; and acknowledging this, India gave a connected meaning to his life from start to finish.

First came *Brahmacharya*, the period of education; then *garhasthya*, that of the world's work; then *vanaprasthya*, the retreat for the loosening of bonds; and finally, *pravrajya*, the expectant awaiting of freedom through death.

Nowadays we have come to look upon life as a conflict with death,—the

intruding enemy, not the natural ending,—in impotent quarrel with which we spend every stage of it. When the time comes for youth to depart, we would hold it back by main force. When the fervour of desire slackens, we would revive it with fresh fuel of our own devising. When our sense organs weaken, we urge them to keep up their efforts. Even when our grip has relaxed, we are reluctant to give up possession. We fain would ignore all the rest of our life except only its morning and noon. And when at last the growing dusk compels us to acknowledge its afternoon and evening, we are either in a rebellious or in a despairing frame of mind, and so unable to make due use of them. We are not trained to recognise the inevitable as natural, and so cannot give up gracefully that which has to go, but needs must wait till it is snatched from us. The truth comes as conqueror only because we have lost the art of receiving it as guest.

The stem of the ripening fruit becomes loose, its pulp soft, but its seed hardens with provision for the next life. Our outward losses, due to age, likewise have corresponding inward gains. But, in man's inner life, his will plays a dominant part, so that these gains depend on his own disciplined striving; that is why, in the case of undisciplined man, it is so often seen that his muscles slacken, the legs totter, and yet his stern hold on life refuses to let go its grip, so much so that he is anxious to exercise his will in regard to worldly details even after his death. This kind of tenacity is coming to be regarded, even in our country, as something to be proud of but what is there so glorious in it?

Renounce we must, and through association gain,—that is the truth of the inner world.

Man leaves the refuge of the womb in order to achieve the further growth of body and mind in which consists the whole of the child life; next, he has to leave the self-nurtred security of this narrow world and enter the fuller which has varied relations with the multitude; lastly comes the decline of the body, and enriched with his experiences, man should now leave the narrower life for the universal life, to which he must dedicate his accumulated wisdom on the one hand and, on the other, should himself enter into relations with the Life Eternal; so that, when finally the decaying body has come to the very end of its tether, the soul views it breaking away quite simply and without regret, in the expectation of its own rebirth into the infinite.

From individual body to community, from community, to universe, from universe to Infinity,—this is the soul's normal progress.

Our sages, therefore, keeping in mind the goal of this progress, did not, in life's first stage of education, prescribe merely the learning of books or things, but *brahmacharya*, the living in discipline, whereby both enjoyment and its renunciation would come equally easy to the strengthened character. Life being a pilgrimage, with liberation in the Supreme Being as its object, the living of it was a spiritual exercise to be carried through its different stages, humbly, reverently and vigilantly. And the pupil, from his very initiation, has this final consummation kept in his view.

The series of adjustments between within and without which constitute the physical life, have become automatic; but in the case of man, his mind comes in as a disturbing factor which is still in the stage of conscious experimentation and which therefore may involve him in endless trouble before its activities can be attuned to universal law. For instance, the body may have come to the end of its requirement of food for the time, whereas the mind will not have it so, but, seeking to prolong the enjoyment of its satisfaction, even beyond actual need, spurs on the tongue and the stomach to greater efforts, thus upsetting age-long adjustments and creating widely ramified trouble in the process of the superficial effort required for procuring needless material.

Once the mind refuses to be bound by actual requirements, there ceases to be any reason why it should cry halt at any particular limit, and so, like trying to extinguish fire with oil, its acquisitions only make its desires blaze up all the fiercer. That is why it is so essential to habituate the mind, from the very beginning, to be conscious of, and desirous of keeping within, the natural limits, in other words, to attune itself to the universal nature, so that, with every liberty to play its varied tunes,it may learn to avoid discord with the Good and the True.

After the period of such education comes the period of worldly life. Our law-giver Manu tells us that.

'It is not possible to discipline ourselves so effectively if out of touch with the world, as while pursuing the world-life with wisdom.'

That is to say, wisdom does not attain completeness except through the living of life; and discipline divorced from wisdom is not true discipline, but merely the meaningless following of custom, which is only a veil for ignorance.

Work becomes true, only when desire has learnt to control itself. Then alone does the householder's state become a centre of welfare for the society, and instead of being an obstacle helps on the final liberation. When all his work is true, having the detachment of unselfishness, its obligations cannot curtail the freedom of his spirit.

When the second stage of life has thus been spent, when the crops that were raised on the field of youth have been harvested and garnered and done with, life's evening comes, the time to leave the enclosure of labour for the open road; to set out for home where peace awaits us. Have we not been toiling through the live-long day for this very home,—the Home which is fulfilment itself?

After the infant leaves the womb, it still has to remain close to its mother for a time, remaining attached in spite of its deliverance, until it can adapt itself to its new freedom. Such is the case in the third stage of life, when man, though aloof from the world, remains in touch with it. He still gives to the world of his store of wisdom, as the ripe fruit dropped from its stem, gives food to the world before its seed finds soil for its further life. His wisdom comes to the world like a shower of rain which is for all, because it is taken up in the upper air of disinterested detachment.

Then at last comes a day when even such free relations have their end,

the emancipated spirit steps out of all bonds to face the Supreme Spirit. Just as a good housewife, while dealing with diverse men and things in the course of her duties, is after all doing the work of her husband's household all the time, openly and tacitly acknowledging at every step her relationship with him, yet at the end of the day she puts aside all her work and betakes herself with her husband to the solitude of their union, so does the soul, whose world-work is done, put away all finite matters and come all alone to its communion with the Eternal.

Only in this way can man's world-life be truly lived from one end of it to the other, without being engaged at every step in trying conclusions with death and without being overcome when death arrives in due course, as by a conquering enemy.

This fourfold way of India attunes the life of man to the sublime harmony of the universe, leaving no room for untrained desires to forget their simple relations therewith and to pursue their destructive career unchecked, but leading them on to their final relations with the Supreme.

I feel that the doubt may arise here: how far is it possible so to mould the whole people of any country? To which I would reply that when the wick is ablaze at its tip, the whole lamp is said to be alight. Whatever may be the ideal of the righteous life, it finds luminous expression only in the top-most few. If in any country even a small number of its people succeed in realizing an ideal, that is a gain for the whole of it.

However dire may be the outward degeneration which has overtaken us in India, there is an inmost core still alive within us, which refuses to acknowledge anything less than the Supreme as the highest gain. Even now when any great soul strikes a higher note, our whole being responds, and no lesser consideration of worldliness can stop it from so doing.

Now-a-days, on occasions of festivity in our country, we have acquired the habit of adding a foreign brass band to the usual set of our own festive pipes, thereby creating a terrible confusion of sound. Nevertheless, the plaintive Indian note of our real yearning may be discerned by the sensitive ear, through all its clash and clang. But while, in the public part of our homes, the foreign big drum and blatant trumpet proclaim the pride of wealth and the emulation of fashion, those who are in touch with the privacy of our inner life, know that this deafening din does not penetrate there.

We were not always this kind of a market crowd, jostling and elbowing one another so vulgarly, quarrelling over privileges and titles, advertising our own worth in unashamed exaggeration. The whole thing is sheer imitation and mostly sham. It has no redeeming feature of courtesy or gracefulness. But, before this age of make-believe overtook us, we had an inherent dignity of our own, which was not impaired by plain living or poverty. This was for us like a congenital armour which used to protect us against all the insults and trials of our material vicissitudes. But this natural protection has been wheedled away from us, driving us to take our stand behind bluster and bluff. Dignity has now become an outside thing which we must bolster up by outward show. As we no

longer reckon inward satisfaction to be the fulness of wealth, we have to hunt for its paraphernalia in foreign shops, and never can gather together enough.

But, in spite of all this, I say that it has not worked its way into the core of our being. It is yet of the outside and therefore, perhaps, so excessively obvious. Just because we have *not* become really used to our new acquisitions, do we make so much of a turmoil about them, like the boisterous movements of the inexpert swimmer.

Moreover, I cannot at all admit that there can be anything in man's higher life which is only good in a particular geographical latitude. It is never true that we must take refuge in meekness because we are weak, or that we want righteousness only as a convenient cloak for hiding our indigence. Ideals preached by great personalities of the world need for their acceptance more steady courage, perfect training, power of sacrifice, than those which are needed to make good our school-learnt lessons on the profits of insensate competition and the duplicity and carnage of a hungry nationalism thriving on human flesh.

To prepare, in a spirit of reverence and by a life of discipline, for the world-life in which the soul is to attain maturity amidst her daily work of self-dedication and find at the serene end of her physical existence her own perfect revelation in a world of ineffable light and life,—is the only way through which a human being can attain to existency and fulness of meaning.

If we believe this, then we must also recognize that each and every people must strive to realize it, overcoming their respective obstacles, in their own way. If they would live in truth, then everything else,—the luxury of individual riches, the might of nations,—must be counted as subordinate. The spirit of man must triumph and liberate itself, if man's incessant endeavour during all these ages is to attain its fulfilment.

If that is not to be, and yet if by the help of some magic wand of progress men find an inexhaustible source of incessant profit, some weapon that in a second can kill millions of enemies, some potion that can keep their mortal bodies alive for ages,—what then?

1924

THE SCHOOLMASTER

If fifty years ago some prophet had come and told me that I was to be invited to a meeting of the teachers of Japan to discuss my ideas of education, it would have startled even the imagination of a poet. For, I suppose, some of you at least know that, once I was thirteen, I have hardly ever been inside an educational institution until literally when I have my reputation as a poet and am invited to lecture.

Thus, when I felt it my duty to start a school for the children, I had hardly any experience of education. This was possibly an advantage for me. Not being tied down by cut and dried doctrines of education, I had to find my own experience through experiment and failure. I was made intensely conscious when I was young of what was wrong in education. It drove me away from school, and it was that which made me decide, when quite old, to found an institution where some of these mistakes should not be made, mistakes from which I had suffered as a boy.

When, at about the age of five, I was forced to attend school, my whole heart rose in rebellion against an arrangement where there was no tinge of colour, no play of life, where the lessons had no context with their surroundings, and where I was banished from that paradise, to which I had been born, where Nature dwells full of beauty,—and this for no crime but that of being born ignorant. I was banished into a cage where education was provided from outside as birds are fed. My whole heart felt the dignity of treatment, even though I was so young.

Our system of education refuses to admit that children are children. Children are punished because they fail to behave like grown-up people and have the impertinence to be noisily childish. Their educators do not know, or they refuse to acknowledge that this childishness is Nature's own provision and that the child through its restless mind and movements should always come into touch with new facts and stumble upon new information. Thus the child becomes the battle-ground for a fight between the schoolmaster and mother Nature herself.

The schoolmaster is of opinion that the best means of educating a child is by concentration of mind, but Mother Nature knows that the best way is by dispersion of mind. When we were children, we came to gather facts by such scattering of mental energy, through unexpected surprises. The surprise gave us that shock which was needed to make us intensely conscious of the facts of life, of the world. Facts must come fresh to children to startle their minds into full activity. But such activity itself was held to be intolerable by the schoolmaster who reigned in the class I was compelled to attend. The master insisted that I should have to be passive and my mind rebelled every moment; for Mother Nature encouraged me never to accept this tyranny from that man.

It is the utter want of purpose in child life which is important. In adult

age, having made our life a bundle of a few definite purposes, we exclude all facts outside their boundaries. Our purpose wants to occupy all the mind's attention for itself, obstructing the full view of most of the things around us; it cuts a narrow bed for our deliberate mind which seeks its end through a restricted passage. The child, because it has no conscious object of life beyond living, can see all things around it, can hear every sound with a perfect freedom of attention, not having to exercise choice in the collection of information. It gives full rein to its restlessness which leads its mind into knocking against knowledge. Like a stream going over pebbles, its hurls itself against obstructions, and through them finds more and more velocity.

But the schoolmaster, as I have said, has his own purpose. He wants to mould the child's mind according to his ready-made doctrines and therefore wants to rid the child's world of everything that he thinks will go against his purpose. He excludes the whole world of colour, of movement, of life, from his education scheme, and snatching the helpless creature from the mother heart of Nature, shuts it in his prison-house, feeling sure that imprisonment is the surest method of improving the child mind. This happens only because he himself is a grown-up person who, when he wants to educate himself has to take the deliberate course of choosing his own subject and material. Therefore he naturally thinks that in educating children that kind of choice is good which is exclusive, that children should attain special facts and that they should have a special manner of acquiring facts. He does not understand that the adult mind in many respects not only differs from, but is contrary to the child mind.

It is like forcing upon the flower the mission of the fruit. The flower has to wait for its chances. It has to keep its heart open to the sunlight and to the breeze, to wait its opportunity for some insect to come seeking honey. The flower lives in a world of surprises, but the fruit must close its heart in order to ripen its seed. It must take a different course altogether. For the flower the chance coming of an insect is a great event, but for the fruit its intrusion means an injury. The adult mind is a fruit mind and it has no sympathy for the flower mind. It thinks that by closing up the child mind from outside, from the heart of Nature and from the world of surprise it can enable it to attain true maturity. It is through this tyranny of the adult mind that the children are everywhere suffering, and when I was about forty I thought I must save some of them, so far as lay in my power, from these mistakes made by prudent people of adult age.

There is no room for surprises in the schoolroom, only the perfect symmetry which can be of non-life. Every morning, exactly on the stroke of the clock, the pupil must attend school, must come to a particular class to hear the same subject taught by the same teacher of forbidding aspect. Exactly at a particular hour he finds his freedom. The holidays are all on the calendar long beforehand and everything is mechanically accurate and perfect.

This is all right for grown-up people. It is profitable for a business man

to be steady and punctual in his work, in his routine. It is even enjoyable when he has a prevision of the profit at the end of the month; he is rewarded when he finds something at its value.

But the child has no such reward of expectation. From day to day, from month to month he goes on through the routine, not knowing what he is to get from his unmeaning sufferings. At the end of the year he comes to the terrible trial of examinations. Then come injustice, for boys who work hard, but to get full marks, are deprived of the reward of their labour, the consolation of the priest. This is a cruel slavery in which to drill the child mind. It is demoralizing. It perfect obedience at the cost of individual responsibility and initiative of mind.

Has it any great or real value? We are saved from trouble when the children, who have their restless wings given them by Nature are at last put into this cage. But we kill that spirit of liberty in their mind, the spirit of adventure, which we all bring with us into the world, the spirit that every day seeks for new experiences. This freedom is absolutely necessary for the intelligent growth of the mind, as well as for the sweet nature of children.

Eventually the whole scheme goes wrong, the police have to come and take the place of conscience. We are raising prisoners for our prison-houses, inmates for our lunatic asylums: we are limiting the mind of the children by crushing their inherent power of gathering facts for themselves, by generalization and analysis, through breaking things and being naughty. The spirit of naughtiness is the greatest gift the child of man brings with him.

When I started my school, I was fortunate in having almost all the naughty boys of the neighbourhood and even from different parts of the country. Because our parents were not used to sending their boys to boarding-schools, only the most intractable boys came so that I had an interesting gathering of just those children who are most preached against in the Sunday-school books.

Who were these naughty boys? Those who had a special gift of energy which the whole spirit of discipline prevailing in respectable society could not wholly still into absolute passivity. Therefore they were considered troublesome and therefore the parents often asked me to punish them,—even when they did nothing wrong. They believed in the code of punishment itself as though it were some bitter medicine for the liver, a regular dose of which was good for the moral health of wicked boys.

But you must know that vigour and energy are Nature's best gifts to children, and there is always a fight between this vigour and the code of respectability in our civilized homes. Through this eternal conflict have been born all kinds of aberration and real wickedness, through an unnatural repression of what is natural and good in itself.

I never used any coercion or punishment against my unruly boys. Most of us think that in order to punish boys who are wicked, a restraint of their freedom is necessary. But restriction itself is the cause of Nature going wrong. When mind and life are given full freedom they achieve health. I adopted the system of freedom cure, if I can give it the name. The boys were allowed to run

about, to climb difficult trees, and often to come to grief in their falls. They would get drenched out in the rain, they would swim in the pond. Through Nature's own method a cure came to these boys who were considered wholly bad and when they returned home, their parents were surprised to find the immense change effected.

Freedom is not merely in unrestricted space and movement. There is such a thing as unrestricted human relationship which is also necessary for the children. They have this freedom of relationship with their mother, though she is much older in age,—in fact through her human love, she feels no obstruction in their communion of hearts, and the mother almost becomes a comrade to her children. This gift of love which Nature has given the mother is absolutely necessary for children because this love is freedom, and so I felt, in this Institution, that our young pupils who come away from their mothers, should have their freedom of relationship with their teachers.

I became the playmate of my students and shared their life completely. When I had a few, I was almost the only teacher they had, and yet they were not frightened at the disparity of age between them and myself. They felt the spirit of home in this place. What is the spirit of the home? It is the natural kinship of a boy with his brothers, his family, and the resulting atmosphere in which the heart finds its full amount of space.

Most teachers do not know that in order to teach boys they have to be boys. Unfortunately schoolmasters are obsessed with the consciousness of their dignity as grown-up persons and as learned men, and therefore they always try to burden the children with their grown-up manners and their learned manners, and that hurts the mind of the students unnecessarily.

I try to let them realize that though we have our difference of age, yet, like wayfarers, we are travelling the same path together—old and young, we are working for the same goal. It is not that we, the teachers, have reached that goal and they the pupils, are immensely away from us. This immensity of difference is a frightful thing. It should never be allowed to work on the minds of children.

There is a lack of living growth in our educational institutions. These institutions are things completed. They are made with iron bars and skilfully built for the accommodation of children within them. But I wanted to let the boys feel that it was not their cage but their nest—that is to say, they also had to take part in building it themselves. The edifice of education should be our common creation, not only the teachers', not only the organizers', but also the students'. The boys must give part of their life to build it up and feel that they are living in a world which is their very own and that is the best freedom which man can have.

If we live in an arrangement which is not our own, but which is made by somebody else, however wise he may be, it is no real world of freedom for us. For our creative mind craves expression for itself in building its own world. I wanted to give that satisfaction to my students, and to give them freedom to manage their own affairs as much as was possible. I always urged them to real-

ize that this school was not mine, but theirs; that the school was not completed—that it waited for its completion through their co-operation; that they have come to learn, by collaborating with their teacher. And I think that students in my institution understood my idea and, because they understood it, they developed an intense love for this institution which they always take occasion to visit whenever they find time and opportunity after they have left it.

I had to consider these significant facts: The birds and animals and men are born with an active mind which seeks its freedom. This activity which they bring with them seeks its world of freedom for its self-education. Then it also has its activity of heart, which seeks for its freedom in the natural relationship of sympathy. Then also it has its activity of soul which seeks its opportunity to create the world for itself—a world of freedom. All these we have to keep in mind in our effort to educate children.

This active mind of theirs must not be thwarted by constant imposition from outside; and their active heart must not be restricted through the unsympathetic obstruction of artificial relationship; and the active creative will must not be allowed to dwindle away into utter passivity through want of opportunity. So in my institution I try to make provision for these three aspects of freedom—freedom of mind, freedom of heart and freedom of will.

I have a deep-rooted conviction that only through freedom can man attain his fulness of growth, and when we restrict that freedom it means that we have some purpose of our own which we impose on the children, and we have not in mind Nature's own purpose of giving the child its fulness of growth. When we want to have more leaves from a tree, we try to train it in such a manner as to suppress its energy of producing flowers and fruit and then all its energy can be utilized in producing leaves, but that does not really give completeness of life for the tree.

If we have some purpose expressed through our educational institutions—that children should be producing patriots, practical men, soldiers, bankers, then it may be necessary that we have to put them through the mechanical drill of obedience and discipline! but that is not the fulness of life, not the fulness of humanity. He who knows that Nature's own purpose is to make the boy a full man when he grows up—full in all directions, mentally and mainly spiritually—he who realizes this, brings up the child in the atmosphere of freedom. Unfortunately we have our human weakness, and we have our love of power, and some teachers—most schoolmasters—have that inherent love of power in them, and they find this field ready-made for its exercise upon these helpless children.

I have noticed this fact, that those teachers who pride themselves on being disciplinarians are really born tyrants, as so many men are, and in order to give outlet to their inherent lust for tyranny, they make use of these helpless children and impose on them their own code of behaviour. They try to crush their minds with tasks which are lifeless, which are mechanical, which kill the intellectual mind, the fresh mind. They impose all kinds of torture because these tyrants take pleasure at the very sight of it, and such a great opportunity

for such enjoyment they can never hope to attain outside their school premises.

This is not only torture and misery for the pupils, but it causes the greatest mischief possible in the human world,—this choice of the schoolmaster's profession by people who ought to have for their vocation that of executioner or prison-warder or something of that kind. An immense amount of sympathy and understanding and imagination are needed to bring up human children. They are not produced and trained for some purposes of display, they are not dancing bears or monkeys. They are human beings, with the treasure of their mind and their spirit. And that work should never be left to the care of those who have no imagination, no real sympathy for children, who cannot be a child. He who has lost the child in himself is absolutely unfit for this great work of educating human children.

Unfortunately for me the language I am using is not yours nor mine, and it is taking a long time. I cannot go fully into details about my system and manner of education owing to this obstruction. But I have given you the general principles of the education which I believe to be true, and it is this—that as God himself finds his own freedom is his own creation and then his nature is fulfilled, human beings have to create their own world and then they can have their freedom. And for that they must be trained, not to be soldiers, not to be clerks in a bank, not to be merchants, but to be the makers of their own world and their own destiny. And for that they must have all their faculties fully developed in the atmosphere of freedom.

We, who only believe in book education, distort the minds of those boys who have their natural gift of teaching themselves through their work, through their direct observation. We force them to accept book lessons, and by doing it we kill for good their power to create their own world. This is happening in most of the human boys. We impose upon them our ideas and also those which are secondhand ideas for us.

That to create our own world has been the purpose of God, we see when we find that, even as children we had our one and only pleasure in that play where, with trifling materials, we gave expression to our imagination. That is more valuable to us as children than gold or bank-notes or anything else. The same thing is true with regard to every human individual. We forget this value of the individual creative power because our minds become obsessed with the artificial value which is made prevalent in society by other peoples' valuation of a particular manner of living, a particular style of respectability. We force ourselves to accept that imposition and we kill the most precious gift that God has given us, the gift of creation, which comes from His own nature.

God is creator, and as His children we. men and women, also have to be creators. But that goes against the purposes of the tyrant, of the schoolmaster, of the educational administration, of most of the governments, each of whom want the children to grow up according to the pattern which they have set for themselves.

1924

CITY AND VILLAGE

The standard of living in modern civilization has been raised far higher than the average level of our necessity. The strain, which such rise of standard makes us exert, increases in the beginning our physical and mental alertness. The claim upon our energy, again, accelerates its growth; and this, in its turn, produces activity that expresses itself by the raising of life's standard still higher.

When this standard attains a degree a great deal above the normal, it encourages the passion of greed. The temptation of inordinately high living, normally confined to a negligibly small section of the community, becomes widespread. This evergrowing burden is sure to prove fatal to any civilization, that puts no restraint on the emulation of self-indulgence.

In the geography of our economic world, the ups and downs produced by the inequality of fortune are healthy only within a moderate range. In a country divided by the constant interruption of steep mountains no great civilization is possible, because therein the natural flow of communication becomes difficult. Large fortunes and luxurious living, like the mountains, form high walls of segregation; they produce worse divisions in society than any physical barriers.

There are some who believe that in the eradication of the idea of property the solution is to be found, for then, and then only, will the communal spirit find its full freedom. But we must know that the urging which has given rise to property, is something fundamental in human nature. If you have the power, you may tyrannically do violence to all that constitutes property; but you cannot change the constitution of mind itself.

Property is a medium for the expression of our personality. If we look at the negative aspect of this personality, we see in it the limits which separate one person from another. And when, in some men, this sense of separateness takes on an intense emphasis, we call them selfish. But its positive aspect reveals the truth, that it is the only medium through which men can communicate with one another. Therefore, all through the course of human history, men have tried to cultivate the sentiments that give our personality its greatest significance, thereby enabling it to bring us close together in bonds of sympathy.

If we kill our individuality because it is apt to be selfish, then human communion itself loses its meaning. But if we allow it to remain and develop, then being creative by nature, it must fashion its own world. Most often and for most men, property is the only frame that can give a foundation for such creation of a personal world. It is not merely money, not merely furniture; it does not represent merely acquisitiveness, but is an objective manifestation of our taste, our imagination, our constructive faculties, our desire for self-sacrifice.

Through this creative limitation which is our personality, we receive, we give, we express. Our highest social training is to make our property the richest

expression of the best in us, of that which is universal, of our individuality whose greatest illumination is love. As individuals are the units that build the community, so property is the unit of wealth that makes for communal prosperity, when it is alive to its function. Our wisdom lies not in destroying separateness of units, but in maintaining the spirit of unity in its full strength.

When life is simple, wealth does not become too exclusive, and individual property finds no great difficulty in acknowledging its communal responsibility, rather, it becomes its vehicle. In former days, in India, public opinion levied heavy taxes upon wealth and most of the public works of the country were voluntarily supported by the rich. The water-supply, medical help, education and amusement were naturally maintained by men of property through a spontaneous adjustment of mutual obligation. This was made possible, because the limits set to the individual right of self-indulgence were narrow, and surplus wealth easily followed the channel of social responsibility. In such a society, property was the pillar that supported its civilization, and wealth gave opportunity to the fortunate for self-sacrifice.

But with the rise of the standard of living, property changes its aspect. It shuts the gate of hospitality, which is the best means of social intercommunication. It displays its wealth in an extravagance which is self-centred. It begets envy and irreconcileable class division. In short, property becomes anti-social. Because, with what is called material progress, property has become intensely individualistic, the method of gaining it has become a matter of science and not of social ethics. It breaks social bonds; it drains the life sap of the community. Its unscrupulousness plays havoc all over the world, generating forces that can coax or coerce peoples to deeds of injustice and wholesale horror.

The forest-fire feeds upon the living world, from which it springs, till it is completely exhausted along with the fuel. When a passion, like greed, breaks loose from the barrier of social control, it acts in like manner, feeding upon the life of society, and the end is annihilation. It had ever been the object of the spiritual training of man to fight those passions that are anti-social and keep them chained. But lately some abnormal temptation has set them free and they are fiercely devouring all that is affording them shelter.

There are always insects in our harvest field which, in spite of their robbery, leave a sufficient surplus for the tillers of the soil, and it does not pay to try to exterminate them. But when some pest, that has enormous powers of self-multiplication, attacks our food crop, it has to be dealt with as a calamity. In human society, in normal circumstances, there are a number of causes that make for wastage, yet it does not cost us too much to ignore them. But to-day the blight, that has fallen on our social life and its resources, is disastrous, because it is not restricted to limited regions. It is an epidemic of voracity that has infected the total area of civlization.

We all now-a-days claim our right of freedom to be extravagant in our enjoyment, to the extent that we can afford it. Not to be able to waste as much upon individual gratification, as my rich reighbour does, merely proves a

poverty of which I am ashamed, and against which my womenfolk and my parasites are prermitted to cherish their grievance. Ours has become a society in which, through its tyrannical standard of respectability, all the members are goading one another to spoil themselves to the uttermost limit.

There is a continual screwing up of the ideal of convenience and comfort, the results of which, however, inevitably fall short of the energy spent, by reason of the wastage involved. The very shriek of advertisement itself, which must constantly accompany the progress of production, means the squandering of an immense quantity of material and life force, and merely helps to swell the sweepings of time.

Civilization to-day has turned into a vast catering establishment. It maintains constant feasts for a whole population of gluttons. The intemperance, which could safely have been tolerated in a few, has spread its contagion to the multitude. The universal greed, produced as a consequence, is the cause of the meanness, cruelty and lies, in politics and commerce, that vitiate the whole human atmosphere. A civilization with such an unnatural appetite must depend for its existence upon numberless victims, and these are being sought in those parts of the world where human flesh is cheap. In Asia and Africa a bartering goes on, whereby the future hope and happiness of entire peoples are sold for the sake of providing fastidious fashion with an endless train of respectable rubbish.

The consequence of such material and moral drain is more evident when one studies the conditions manifested in the fatness of the cities and the physical and mental anaemia of the villages, almost everywhere in the world. For cities have become inevitably important. They represent energy and materials concentrated for tha satisfaction of that exaggerated appetite, which is the characteristic symptom of modern civilization. Such abnormal devouring process cannot be carried on, unless certain parts of the social body conspire and organize to feed upon the whole. This is suicidal; but, before its progressive degeneracy ends in death, the disproportionate enlargement of the particular section looks formidably great, and conceals the starved pallor of the entire body,—the sacrifice of the great maintaining the small in its enormity, and creating for the time being an illusion of wealth.

The living relationship, in a physical or social body, is the sympathetic mutuality of help among its members and organs, whereby a perfect balance of communication between them is maintained, so that the consciousness of unity is not obstructed. The resulting health and wealth are of secondary importance,—the unity is ultimate in itself. The perfect rhythm of reciprocity which generates and maintains this unity is disturbed whenever some ambition of power establishes its dominance in life's republic.

What in the West is called democracy can never be true in a society where greed grows, uncontrolled, encouraged, even admired by the populace. In such an atmosphere, a constant struggle goes on among individuals to capture public organizations for the satisfaction of their own personal ambition, and

democracy becomes like an elephant whose one purpose in life is to give joy rides to the clever and the rich.

In this kind of Body politic, the organs of information and expression, through which opinions are manufactured, together with the machinery of administration, are all openly or secretly manipulated by those prosperous few, who have been compared of old to the camel, which can never pass through a needle's eye,—the gate that leads to the kingdom of ideals. Such a society necessarily becomes inhospitable and suspicious, and callously cruel against those who preach their faith in spiritual freedom. In such a society, people are intoxicated through the constant stimulation of what they call progress, a progress which they are willing to buy at the cost of civilization itself, like the man for whom wine has more attraction than food.

Villages are like women. In their keeping is the cradle of the race. They are nearer to nature than towns; and are therefore in closer touch with the fountain of life. They have the atmosphere which possesses a natural power of healing. It is the function of the village, like that of woman, to provide people with their elemental needs, with food and joy, with the simple poetry of life, and with those ceremonies of beauty which the village spontaneously produces and in which she finds delight. But when constant strain is put upon her through the extortionate claim of ambition; when her resources are exploited through the excessive stimulus of temptation, then she becomes poor in life, her mind becomes dull and uncreative; and from her time-honoured position of the wedded partner of the city, she is degraded to that of maid-servant. While, in its turn, the city, in its intense egotism and pride, remains unconscious of the devastation it constantly works upon the very source of its life and health and joy.

Those who are familiar with the Hindu Pantheon know that in our mythology there is a demi-god named Kuvera, similar in character to Mammon. He represents the multiplication of money whose motive force is greed. His figure is ugly and gross with its protuberant belly, comic in its vulgarity of self-exaggeration. He is the genius of property that knows no moral responsibility. But the goddess, Lakshmi, who is the Deity of Prosperity, is beautiful. For prosperity is for all. It dwells in that property which, though belonging to the individual, generously owns its obligation to the community. Lakshmi is seated on a lotus, the lotus which is the symbol of the universal heart. It signifies that she presides over that wealth which means happiness for all men, which is hospitable.

By some ill-luck, Lakshmi has been deprived of her lotus throne in the present age, and Kuvera is worrshipped in her place. Modern cities represent his protuberant stomach, and ugliness reigns unashamed. About one thing we have to be reminded, that there is no cause for rejoicing in the fact that this ugliness has an enormous power of growth and that it is prolific of its progeny. Its growth is not true progress; it is a disease which keeps the body swelling while it is being killed.

The sunshine that is diffuse maintains life in a whole forest of trees; and the sunshine of wealth is symbolised in Lakshmi. The sunshine, when it is focussed through a burning glass on a narrow spot, can reduce the same forest of trees to ashes; this hungry fire of concentrated wealth is symbolised in Kuvera, and he is the presiding deity of our modern cities.

Modern cities are continually growing bigger only because no central spirit of Unity exercises vital control over their growth of dimension. There can be no end to their addition of hugeness, because their object is not to modulate human relationships into some beauty of truth, but to gain convenience.

When in the Sanskrit poem, *Meghaduta*, we follow the path of the cloud messenger and in imagination pass over the old-world towns mentioned in it, with their beautiful names, we feel that the poet in reciting them was giving voice to his hungering delight of some remembrance; we instinctively know that these towns expressed more than anything else the love and hope of man, treasuring some of the splendour of his soul in their houses and temples with their auspicious decoration daily accomplished by women, and even in the picturesque bartering that went on in their market places.

We can imagine what Delhi and Agra must have been in the time to which they belonged. They manifested in their development some creatively human aspect of a great empire. Whatever might have been its character, these cities even in their decay still retain in their maginficence the true product of the self-respect of man. But modern cities merely give opportunities, not ideals.

Cities there must be in man's civilization, just as in higher organisms there must be organized centres of life, such as the brain, heart, or stomach. These never overwhelm the living wholeness of the body; on the contrary, by a perfect federation of their functions, they maintain its richness. But a tumour round which the blood is congested, is the enemy of the whole body upon which it feeds as it swells. Our modern cities, in the same way feed upon the whole social organism that runs through the villages; they continually drain away the life stuff of the community, and slough off a huge amount of dead matter, while assuming a lurid counterfeit of prosperity.

Thus, unlike a living heart, these cities imprison and kill the blood and create poison centres filled with the accumulation of death. When a very large body of men comes together for the sake of some material purpose, then it is as a congestion and not a congregation. When men are close together and yet develop no intimate bond of human relationship, there ensues moral putrefaction. Wherever in the world, this modern civilization is spreading its dominion, the life principle of society, which is the principle of personal relationship, is injured at the root.

All this is the result of an almost complete substitution of true civilization by what the West calls Progress. I am never against progress, but when, for its sake, civilization is ready to sell its soul, then I choose to remain primitive in my material possessions, hoping to achieve my civilization in the realm of the spirit.

People, as a whole, do and must live in the village, for it is their natural habitation. But the professions depend upon their special appliances and environment, and therefore barricade themselves with particular purposes, shutting out the greater part of universal nature, which is the cradle of life. The city, in all civilizations, represents this professionalism,—some concentrated purpose of the people. That is to say, people have their home in the village and their offices in the city.

We all know that the office is for serving and enriching the home, and not for banishing it into insignificance. But we also know that when goaded by greed, the gambling spirit gets hold of a man, he is willing to rob his home of all its life and joy and to pour them into the hungry jaws of the office. For a time such a man may prosper, but his prosperity is gained at the cost of happiness. His wife may shine in a blaze of jewelry, rousing envy along the path of her economic triumph, but her spirit withers in secret, thirsting for love and the simple delights of life.

Society encourages the professions only because they are of service to the people at large. They find their truth when they belong to the people. But the professions, because they get all power into their hands, begin to believe that people live to maintain them. Thus we often see that a lawyer thrives by taking advantage of the weaknesses of his clients, their helpless dread of loss, their dishonest love of gain. The proportion between the help rendered and its reward demanded, loses its legitimate limit, when it is not guided by any standard of social ethics.

Such a moral perversion has come to its extreme length to-day in the relationship of the city and the village. The city, which is the professional aspect of society, has gradually come to believe that the village is its legitimate field for exploitation, that the village must at the cost of its own life maintain the city in all its brilliance of luxuries and excesses; that its wealth must be magnified even though that should involve the bankruptcy of happiness.

True happiness is not at all expensive, because it depends upon that natural spring of beauty and life which is harmony of relationship. Ambition pursues its path of self-seeking by breaking this bond of harmony, cutting gaps, creating dissensions. It feels no hesitation in trampling under foot the harvest field, which is for all, in order to snatch away in haste the object of its craving. To-day this ambition, wasteful and therefore disruptive of social life, the greatest enemy of civilization, has usurped the helm of society.

In India we had our family system, large and complex, each family a miniature society in itself. I do not wish to discuss the question of its desirability. But its rapid decay in the present day clearly points out the nature and process of the principle of destruction which is at work in modern civilization. When life was simple and its needs normal, when selfish passions were under control, such a domestic system was perfectly natural and fully productive of happiness. The family resources were sufficient for all and the claims on them were never excessive on the part of one or more of its individual members. But such a group can never survive, if the personal

ambition of a single member begins separately to clamour for a great deal more than is necessary for him. When emulation in augmenting private possession, and the enjoyment of exclusive advantage runs ahead of the common good and general happiness, the bond of harmony, which is the bond of sustenance, must give way and brothers must separate, nay, even become enemies.

The passion that rages in the heart of modern civilization is, like a volcanic flame, constantly struggling to throw up eruptions of individual bloatedness. The stream of production, which thereupon gushes forth, may give one the impression of a huge, indefinite, gain. But such interruption needs must disturb man's creative mind. We forget that it is only the spirit of creation evolving out of its own inner abundance, that adds to our true wealth; and that the spirit of production but consumes our resources in the process of building and filling it storehouses. Therefore our needs which stimulate production must observe the limits of the normal. If we go on poking them into a bigger and bigger flame, the conflagration will no doubt dazzle our sight, but its splendour will leave on its debit side a black heap of charred remains.

When our wants are moderate, the rations we claim do not exhaust the common store of nature and the pace of their restoration does not hopelessly fall behind that our consumption of them. This moderation, moreover, leaves us leisure to cultivate happiness, the happiness which is the artist soul of the human world, creating beauty of form and rhythm of life. But man to-day forgets that the divinity in him is revealed by the halo of his happiness.

The Germany of the period of Goethe was considered to be poor by the Germany of the period of Bismarck. Possibly the standard of civilization, illumined by the mind of Plato, or by the life of the Emperor Asoka, is underrated by the proud children of modern times who compare it with the present age of progress, an age dominated by millionaries, diplomats and war-lords. Many things that are of common use to-day were absolutely lacking in those days. But are those who lived then to be pitied by the young boys of our time, who have more of the printing press, but less of the mind?

I often imagine that the moon, being smaller in size than the earth, begat life on her soil earlier than was possible on that of her companion. Once, she too had her constant festival of colour, music, movement; her storehouse was perpetually replenished with food for her children who were already there and who were to come. Then in course of time, some race was born to her, gifted with a furious energy of intelligence, which began greedily to devour its surroundings. It produced beings, who, because of the excess of their animal spirit coupled with intellect lacked the imagination to realize that the mere process of addition did not create fulfilment; that acquisition because of its bigness did not produce happiness; that movement did not constitute progress merely because of its velocity; that progress could have meaning only in relation to some ideal of completeness. Through machinery of tremendous power, they made such an addition to their natural capacity for gathering and

holding, that their career of plunder outstripped nature's power of recuperation. Their profit-makers created wants which were unnatural and dug big holes in the stored capital of nature, forcibly to extract provision for them. When they had reduced the limited store of material, they waged furious wars among their different sections for the special allotment of the lion's share. In their scramble for the right of self-indulgence they laughed at moral law and took it to be a sign of racial superiority to be ruthless in the satisfaction of their desires. They exhausted the water, cut down the trees, reduced the surface of the planet into a desert riddled with pits. They made its interior a rifled pocket, emptied of its valuables. At last one day, like a fruit whose pulp has been completely eaten by insects which it sheltered, the moon became a lifeless shell, a universal grave for the voracious creatures who had consumed the world to which they were born.

My imaginary selenites behaved exactly in the way that human beings are behaving on this earth, fast exhausting the stores of sustenance not because they must live their normal life, but because they strain their capacity of life to a pitch of monstrous excess. Mother Earth has enough for the healthy appetite of her children and something extra for rare cases of abnormality. But she has not nearly enough for the sudden growth of a whole world of spoilt and pampered children.

Man has been digging holes into the very foundations, not only of his livelihood, but also of his life; he is feeding upon his own body. The reckless wastage of humanity which ambition produces, is best seen in the villages, where the light of life is being dimmed, the joy of existence dulled, the natural threads of social communion snapped every day. It should be our mission to restore the full circulation of life's blood into these maltreated limbs of society; to bring to the villages health and knowledge; wealth of space in which to live; wealth of time in which to work and to rest and to enjoy; respect which will give them dignity; sympathy which will make them realize their kinship with the world of men, and not merely their survient position.

Streams, lakes and oceans are there on this earth. They exist not for the hoarding of water exclusively within their own areas. They send up the vapour which forms into clouds and helps towards a wider distribution of water. Cities have their functions of maintaining wealth and knowledge in concentrated forms of opulence, but this also, should not be for their own sake; they should be centres of irrigation; they should gather in order to distribute; they should not magnify themselves, but should enrich the entire commonwealth. They should be like lamp-posts, and the light they support must transcend their own limits.

Such a relationship of mutual benefit between the city and the village can remain strong only so long as the spirit of co-operation and self-sacrifice is a living ideal in society. When some universal temptation overcomes this ideal, when some selfish passion gains ascendency, then a gulf is formed and goes on widening between them; then the mutual relationship of city and village becomes that of exploiter and victim. This is a form of perversity whereby the

body-politic becomes its own enemy and whose termination is death.

We have started in India, in connection with our Visvabharati, work of village reconstruction, the mission of which is to retard this process of race suicide. If I try to give you the details of our work, they will look small. But we are not afraid of this appearance of smallness, for we have confidence in life. We know that if as a seed it represents the truth that is in us, it will overcome opposition and conquer space and time. According to us, the poverty problem is not the most important, the problem of unhappiness is the great problem. Wealth, which is the synonym for the production and collection of things, men can make use of ruthlessly. They can crush life out of the earth and flourish. But, happiness, which may not compete with wealth in its list of materials, is final, it is creative; therefore it has its source of riches within itself.

Our object is to try to flood the choked bed of village life with the stream of happiness. For this the scholars, the poets, the musicians, the artists, have to collaborate, to offer their contributions. Otherwise they must live like parasites, sucking life from the people and giving nothing back to them. Such exploitation gradually exhausts the soil of life, which needs constant replenishing, by the return to it of life, through the completion of the cycle of receiving and giving back.

Most of us, who try to deal with the poverty problem, think of nothing but a greater intensive effort to production, forgetting that this only means a greater exhaustion of materials as well as of humanity. This only means giving exaggerated opportunity for profit to a few, at the cost of the many. It is food which nourishes, not money; it is fulness of life which makes one happy, not fulness of purse. Multiplying materials intensifies the inequality between those who have and those who have not, and this deals a fatal wound to the social system, through which the whole body is eventually bled to death.

1924

THE VOICE OF HUMANITY

My friends, I have been waiting for this moment. When Prof. Formichi asked me to tell him what would be my subject this evening, I said I did not know; for you must understand that I am not a speaker. I am nothing better than a poet. When I speak, I speak *with* my surroundings and not *to* my surroundings. Now that I see your kind faces, your silent voice has reached my heart, and my voice will blend with it. When the heart wishes to pay its debt, it must have some coin with the stamp of its own realm upon it–and that is our mother tongue. But I do not know your beautiful language, neither do you know mine. Since, therefore, that medium cannot be used for the commerce of thought and sentiment between you and myself, I have reluctantly to use the English language, which is neither yours nor mine. Therefore at the outset I ask you to forgive me—those of you who do not know this language, as also those of you who do—because my English is a foreigner's English.

Now I know what I am going to speak to you about. It will be in answer to the question as to what was the urging that brought me to you across the sea. Some time in 1921 I felt a great desire to make my pilgrimage to the shrine of humanity, where he human mind was fully awake, with all its lamps lighted, there to meet face to face the Eternal in man. It had occurred to me that this present age was dominated by the European mind only because that mind was fully awake. You all know how the spirit of great Asia is going through an age-long slumber in the depth of night, with only few lonely watchers to read the stars and wait for the sign of the rising sun across the darkness. So I had this longing to come to Europe and see the human spirit in the full blaze of its power and beauty. Then it was that I took that voyage—my voyage of pilgrimage to Europe—leaving for the moment my own work at Shanti-Niketan and the children I loved.

But this was not my first visit to Europe. In the year 1878, when I was a boy, barely seventeen, I was brought over by my brother to these shores. It will be difficult for you to realize what visions we had in the East, in those days, of this great continent of Europe. Though I was young, and though my knowledge of English was very insufficient, yet I had heard of her great poets and her heroes, of the ideal Europe of literature, so full of the love of freedom and of humanity.

Italy was my first introduction to Europe. In those days the steamers stopped at Brindisi, and I still remember, when we reached the port, it was midnight under a full moon. I came rushing up on deck from my bed, and shall never forget that marvellous scene, enveloped in the silent mystery of the moonlight—the sight of Europe asleep, like a maiden dreaming of beauty and peace.

It was fortunate for me that Brindisi was a small town, a quiet place, not so aggressively different from the scenes to which I had been accustomed from my childhood. I felt sure that its heart was open to me, to welcome the boy

poet, who though young was even in those days a dreamer. I was greatly elated as I left the steamer to pass the night in what I suppose in these days of progress would be termed a third-rate hotel, having no electric light or other conveniences. I felt that I was in the arms of this great mother Europe and my heart seemed to feel the warmth of her breast.

The next day I woke and, with my brother and an Indian friend, wandered into an orchard close by, a garden of paradise which threatened no punishment against trespassers. Ah, what delight I had that morning in the limpid sunlight, in the hospitality of leaf and fruit and flower! There was an Italian girl there, who reminded me of our Indian maidens, with eyes dark like bees, which have the power to explore the secret honey-cells of love in the lotus of our hearts. (You know, with us the lotus is the emblem of the heart.) She was a simple girl with a coloured kerchief round her head and a complexion not too white. That is, it was not a pallid lack of complexion. (I wish to be forgiven when I say that the complexion of whiteness is the complexion of the desert, not the complexion of life.) Hers was like that of a bunch of grapes caressed by the warm kisses of the sun, the sun which had modulated the beauty of her face, giving it a tender bloom.

I need not dwell at length upon the feelings I experienced; it is enough to say that I was of the impressionable age of seventeen. I felt that I had come to a land of beauty, of repose and joy, which even at that time inspired my mind with the idea that one day I should claim its welcome for me.

With me it was a case of love at first sight; but for my companions it was but a fleeting moment, so that I was not free to stay, but had to continue the journey with my brother, who wanted me to hasten to my lessons in English. Being a truant by nature, I had always refused to attend my classes, and thus having become a problem to my elders, they had decided to send me to England to learn under compulsion the language which, according to their notion, would give me the stamp of respectability.

England is a great country, and I pay my homage to the greatness of her people, but I must be excused if I did not appreciate it at the moment. For an Indian boy such as I was, left there alone in the depth of winter when the birds were silent and the sun so miserly with its gifts, the country seemed on every side like a visible spirit of rude refusal. I was homesick and extremely shy. I was frightened at the sombrely dressed people who stared at me. From my lodging-house, facing Regent's Park, I would gaze with a feeling of bewilderment at its monotony of leaflessness through the mists, the fogs, and the drizzle. In a word, I was young—too young to enter into the spirit of England at that time. I merely glanced at the surface of things with my distracted heart always yearning for its own nest across the sea.

After a few months' stay, I went back home to India. But I dare not here give a recital of my idle days which followed to those of you who are young, and for whom the example of a studiously strenuous life of usefulness would perhaps be more beneficial. I avoided all kinds of educational training that could give me any sort of standardized culture stamped with a university

degree. I dreamt, wrote verses, stories and plays, lived in solitude on the banks of the Ganges, and hardly knew anything of the movements and counter-movements of forces in the great world.

Whilst I was in the midst of my creative work, there came to me an inner message asking me to come out of my seclusion and seek life in the heart of the crowd. I knew not what I could do. I had a love for children, so that I called them round me, in order to rescue them from the dismal dungeons of the educational department, and find for them that atmosphere of sympathy and freedom which they needed most. I chose a beautiful and secluded spot where, in collaboration with Mother Nature, it was possible to bring up these boys in a spirit of wisdom and love.

While I was still busy doing service to children I do not know what possessed me all of a sudden. From some far-away sky came to me a call of pilgrimage reminding me that we are all born pilgrims—pilgrims of this green earth. A voice questioned me: 'Have you been to the sacred shrine where Divinity reveals itself in the thoughts and dreams and deeds of Man?' I thought possibly it was in Europe where I must seek it and know the full meaning of my birth as a human being in this world. And so for the second time I came to this continent.

But, meanwhile, I had grown up and learnt much of the history of man. I had sighed with the great poet Wordsworth, who became sad when he saw what man had done to man. We too have suffered at the hands of man—not tigers and snakes, not elemental forces of nature, but human beings. Men are ever the greatest enemy of Man. I had felt and known it; all the same, there was a hope, deep in my heart, that I should find some place, some temple, where the immortal spirit of man dwelt hidden like the sun behind clouds.

Yet, when I arrived in the land of my quest, I could not stop the insistent question which kept troubling me with a sense of despair: 'Why is it that Europe with all her power of mind is racked with unrest? How is it that she is overcome with such a whirlwind of suspicion and jealousy and greed? Why is it that her greatness itself offers a vast field for fiercely contending passions to have their devil-dance in the lurid light of conflagration?'

When I travelled from Italy to Calais I saw the beautiful scenery on both sides of the railway. These men, I thought, have the ability to love their soil; and what a great power is this love! How they have beautified and made fruitful the whole continent with heroic sacrifice! With the force of their love they have fully won their country for themselves, and this ever-active service of their devotion, for generations, has given rise in them to an irresistible power. For love is the highest human truth, and truth gives fulness of life. The earth is overwhelmed by it, not because of man's covetousness, but because of this life-giving shower of heart and mind that he has poured around him. How he has struggled to eradicate the obstinate barrenness from the inert! How he has fought and defeated at every step the evil in everything that was hostile in his surroundings! Why then this dark misery lowering over Europe, why this widespread menace of doom in her sky?

Because the love for her own soil and children will no longer suffice for her. So long as destiny offered to her only a limited problem, Europe did more or less satisfactorily solve it. Her answer was patriotism, nationalism—that is to say, love only for that and those to whom she happened to be related. According to the degree of truth in this love she has reaped her harvest of welfare. But to-day, through the help of science, the whole world has been given to her for a problem. How to answer it in the fulness of truth she has yet to learn. Because the problem has become vast, the wrong answer is fraught with immense danger.

A great truth has been laid bare to you, and according to your dealing with it you will attain the fulfilment of your destiny. If you do not have the strength to accept it in the right spirit, your humanity will rapidly degenerate; your love of freedom, love of justice, love of truth, love of beauty, will wither at the root; and you will be rejected of God.

Do you not realize how a rigid ugliness is everywhere apparent—in your cities, in your commerce, the same monotonous mask—so that nowhere is there room for a living expression of the spirit? This is the creeping in of death, limb by limb, in the body of your civilization.

Love can be patient. Beauty is moulded and matured by patience. Your great artists knew it in the days when they could gladly modulate all the riches of their leisure into some tiny detail of beauty. The greedy man can never do this. Factories are the triumph of ugliness, for no one has the patience to try to give them the touch of grace; and so, everywhere in God's world to-day, we are faced with what is called progress, a progress towards inhospitable ugliness, towards the eddy of a bottomless passion which is voracity. Can you call to mind any great voice speaking out of the human heart in these modern days?

We have no doubt reason to be proud of Science. We offer to Europe our homage in return for her gift of science, now bequeathed to posterity. Our sages have said: 'The Infinite has to be known and realized. For man, the Infinite is the only true source of happiness.' Europe has come face to face with the Infinite in the world of extension, the domain of external Nature.

I do not cry down the material world. I fully realize that this is the nurse and the cradle of the Spirit. By achieving the Infinite in the heart of the material world you have made this world more generous than it ever was. But merely coming to a rich fact does not give us the right to own it. The great Science which you have discovered still awaits your meriting. Through what you have gained outwardly you may become successful, but you may miss greatness in spite of the success.

Because you have strenuously cultivated your mind in Europe, because of your accuracy of observation and the development of your reasoning faculties, these discoveries you have undoubtedly deserved. But discoveries have to be realized by a complete humanity—Knowing has to be brought under the control of Being—before Truth can be fully honoured. But our Being, the fundamental reality in the human world, with which all other truths

have to be brought into harmony at any cost, is not within the domain of Science. Truth when not properly treated turns back on us to destroy us. Your very science is thus becoming your destroyer.

If you have acquired a thunderbolt for yourself, you must earn the right arm of a god to be safe. You have failed to cultivate those qualities which would give you full sovereign right over science and therefore you have missed peace. You cry for peace, and only build another frightful machine, some new powerful combination. Quiet may be imposed by outside compulsion for a time, but Peace comes from the inner spirit, from the power of sympathy, the power of self-sacrifice—not of organization.

I have great faith in humanity. Like the sun it can be clouded, but never extinguished. I admit that at this time when the human races have met together as never before, the baser elements appear predominant. The powerful are exulting at the number of their victims. They take the name of science to cultivate the schoolboy superstition that they have certain physical signs indicating their eternal right to rule, as the explosive force of the earthquake once might have claimed, with enough of evidence, its never-ending sway over the destiny of this earth. But they in their turn will be disappointed.

Theirs is the cry of a past that is already exhausted, a past that has thrived upon the exclusive spirit of national individualism which will no longer be able to keep the balance in its perpetual disharmony with its surroundings. Only those races will prosper who, for the sake of their own perfection and permanent safety, are ready to cultivate the spiritual magnanimity of mind that enables the soul of man to be realized in the heart of all races.

For men to come near to one another and yet to continue to ignore the claims of humanity is a sure process of suicide. We are waiting for the time when the spirit of the age will be incarnated in a complete human truth and the meeting of men will be translated into the Unity of Man.

I have come to your door seeking the voice of humanity, which must sound its solemn challenge and overcome the clamour of the greedy crowd of slave-drivers. Perhaps it is already being uttered in whispers behind closed doors, and will grow in volume till it bursts forth in a thundering cry of judgment, and the vulgar shout of brute force is silenced in awe.

1925

THE INDIAN IDEAL OF MARRIAGE

A REQUEST HAS come to me from Europe to say something about the Indian idea of marriage. This puts me in mind of the difference between the European and the Indian idea,—a difference which is not merely of outer method, but of inner purpose.

Like all distinctive features of civilized societies, the marriage system is an attempt at compromise between the biological purposes of Nature and the sociological purposes of Man; and both its outer form and inner aim depends upon the divergence between these two. For, in his individual as well as in his social life, man is governed by this Diarchy.

Thus, where society is complex with a net-work of widely-ramified relationships, the natural propensities have to be kept in check by social pressure from every side. While, where wants are numerous and their supply difficult, and man is compelled to venture forth to distant places to make a living, there the social obligations need must be light, and the nature and extent of the mutual claims of individuals over one another cannot be rigidly prescribed by society, but must be left to be adjusted by the individuals themselves.

It is a matter of comment by Europeans that we use no word like 'thanks' in our own language, for expressing gratitude; and they jump to the conclusion that our character must be free from that troublesome feeling. But the fact is, that in our society the obligation of the giver of help is held to be stronger than that of the recipient. On him who has acquired learning is cast the duty of giving to others,—that is not taken as a favour done by teacher to student. The offering of hospitality even to the casual visitor, is incumbent on the householder for his own sake. Each of the domestic ceremonies, from the birth-celebration to the funeral, is but an expression of the debt which each member owes to his community. From this it becomes evident that our society is not like a stream on which its members float in comparative freedom, but like the earth in whose depths their root-system is held secure.

The Aryans of India were at first forest dwellers. Then as the dense screen of forest was lifted off the stage of their history, India's broad, river-served plains were converted from sylvan shelters of patriarchal communities into monarchical territories; and agriculture became the mainstay of her growing settlements. On the one hand, the close neighbourhood of peoples, racially different, giving rise to perpetual cultural conflict; and, on the other, the agricultural civilization claiming co-operation and the complex regulations of stable life,—these are the two forces that moulded Hindu society and still guide its course. Such a society can never exist and perform its functions unless peace is maintained amongst its members by a perfect system of mutual adjustment of rights.

In the beginning of India's history, of which we gain glimpses in the

Rāmāyaṇa, three different parties are to be distinguished,—the Aryans, the barbarians (variously called monkeys, bears, etc.) and the powerful, cultured Rākshasas. While all these were at daggers drawn, their constant dissensions precluded the establishment of any common social polity. Then as the conquering Kshatriyas extended their sway, and populous settlements grew up in their wake, the need for peace was felt and its merits were exalted. So, broadly speaking, the establishment of relationships between the Aryans, the barbarians and the Rākshasas, form the main theme of the Rāmāyaṇa.

Courage, in the ethics of Peace, means the courage of self-sacrifice; there, bravery has for its object the triumph Renunciation. And, in societies where such sacrifice and renunciation are cultivated, not the individual but the household is the primary unit, and such household is broad, not narrow conception and content. That is why, as the Rāmāyaṇa evolves from a collection of ballads into an epic, its main function is transformed from a narration of struggles against the outrages offered to the cult of tillage (*sītā*) into the exaltation of the Ethics of the Household. The unfaltering strength of self-renunciation which is needful for keeping true the varied relations between king and subject, father and son, brother and brother, husband and wife, master and servant, and among neighbours different in colour and character,—that is what it really glorifies.

Wherever many men have congregated, not for the purpose of attacking others, but for mutual benefit, there is evolved a mentality which eventually transcends all considerations of expediency and envisages Supreme Good as an absolute fulfilment. And so, in our country, there was a day when the household was glorified, not as a comfortable home, not as the enjoyment of proprietary right, but as the means of living the fullest communal life, and through it of attaining supreme liberation at the end.

The intimacy of relationship with wife and child is but natural, and so may hardly help to loosen the bonds of self,—rather it serves to strengthen them. But the household wherein even the most distant of kinsmen have a recognized right, where one's own earnings have to be shared by those who are almost strangers, where it is a matter of shame and censure if differences be made between near and distant relations,—there the claims of moral welfare override those of natural affection, and give rise to certain special qualities of heart. These gradually grow so powerful that both the individual as well as the social conscience refuse to tolerate any personal claims when these conflict with those of the household *dharma*.

Therefore the home of the Indian has never been looked upon as his castle, the place where he is lord and master. No doubt the duty, there cast on him, of considering the rights of others on any and every occasion, has involved him in expenditure of time and money but his accounts have ever been cast up, not in terms of self-interest, but of social and spiritual welfare.

In societies where the household is founded on the comfort and convenience of the individual, his acceptance or non-acceptance of the householders' estate remains optional. If any such should say that he does not care

for domestic joys, but prefers the freedom of irresponsibility, no room for objection is left. But in Hindu India, because the household is an essential element in its social structure, marriage is almost compulsory,—like conscription in Europe on the threat of war.

According to our Lawgivers, anyone making gifts to, or taking gifts from, a Brahmin who remains a householder, but does not marry, goes to hell. Says Atri: 'No hospitality should be accepted from an unmarried householder.' The household has been compared, in our *shāstras*, to a great tree; for, just as the roots of the latter support its branches, twigs and foliage, so does the life of the household maintain the different institutions of society; and the Lawgiver lays it down that the King should do honour to the upholder of the householders' estate. But the mere fact of setting up a household, anyhow, does not constitute that estate according to our *shāstras*:

Grihasthopi kriyāyukto na grihena grihāsrami,
Na chaiva putradārena svakarma parivarjita.

Not by the house is made the household but by the performance of the householders' duties,—nor even by wife and children, if the householder be wanting in his own *karma*.

Karma here does not mean the looking after his family interests, but the performance of his specific duty,—the fulfilment of his obligation to society.

Tathā tathaiva kāryāni na kālastu vidhīyate,
Asminneva prayuñjáno hyasminneva tu līyate.

With society are we connected, in it do we terminate this life, therefore should we do our duty as it arises, and not await our own convenience.

To perform the duties of a householder is in fact looked upon as a spiritual discipline. Says Vasistha:

Grihastha eva yajate grihasthastapyate tapah,
Chaturnāmāsramānāntu grihasthastu vishishyate.

That is to say, because the life of a householder is a life of self abnegation having its manifold obligations to gods and men therefore of all the four *āsramas*, the *āsrama* or estate of the householder is specially distinguished.

In societies where the household is but the means of ensuring the comfort and security of the individual, the notion of property also becomes intensely individualistic; for the right of property is at the base of the householders' estate. And when property is viewed as dedicated to individual enjoyment, it ceases as such to be a joy to the others who own it not, but becomes rather an object of their envy. Not only that, but in the process of its acquisition the question of social or moral welfare is lost sight of, and the spirit of rivalry and competition acknowledges no limit. And so, in ancient India, the class of merchants whose object in life was to acquire wealth in excess of the requirements of their livelihood, were held in contempt. Even to-day, water touched by such is deemed to be impure.

A school of thought has arisen in Europe which looks upon property as inherently vicious, and would advise its forcible extirpation. For, there, the irresponsible ownership of property is a potent factor in maintaining the antagonism between the claims of universal humanity and of individual man. And, so far, Western Politics has devoted its forces to the protection of the rights of the proprietor. Hence the need for this counter-movement.

But many substances which are now good food, were once unpalatable or even poisonous. Man, however, did not reject those at the outset, but made them wholesome and toothsome by a long process of culture. India, likewise, cultivated the viciousness out of property by converting the household into a field for spiritual discipline. And thus society in India stably maintained itself for centuries on the basis of the individual ownership of property; in fact India's wealth of food and clothing, education, morals and religion were all so acquired,—by virtue of that original precautionary measure.

When the welfare of society is left to depend on the voluntary generosity of its wealthy members, then is the vicious aspect of property brought out; for the indiscriminate acceptance of charity spoils the recipient. But, in India, expenditure by the householder for social welfare was not a matter of generosity, but of primary duty in the interests of his own fulfilment. Such duty was cast not only on the rich, but also on the poor, according to their means. Manu says: 'The *rishis*, the forefathers, the gods, the guests, and all living creatures, expect to be maintained by the house-holder. Knowing this, he should act accordingly.' By many such injunctions and in diverse other ways, are the Indian people kept reminded that the *dharma* of the householder consists in fulfilling the various claims of humanity. And further, in Manu's opinion, those who are of weak character and have no control over their passions,—they are not worthv of the householders' high estate.

In order to understand the principle underlying Hindu marriage, it is necessary first to come to a true appreciation of this principle underlying the Hindu social system. It will then become clear that, in this type of society, having for its object the perfection of communal life, there is danger in allowing marriage to pursue the path of self-will. Such a society can only withstand the encroachments of Nature, if its marriage system is walled round with a protective embankment. So the Hindu ideal of marriage has no regard for individual taste on inclination,—it is, rather, afraid of them.

If any European would really understand the psychology behind this, let him bethink himself of the state of things that obtained during the last war. Ordinarily, in Europe, there is no bar to international marriages. But, when the one objective of the war overshadowed all other considerations, marriage with the subject of an enemy country became an impossibility; so much so, that European society felt no compunction in cruelly severing even long-standing marriage ties of this description. Not only was the marriage question so affected, but during war conditions, food and all other amenities of life had to be cut down to a uniform standard. The personal liberty and elasticity of occupation, so characteristic of Western civilization, tendedd wholly to disappear.

These war conditions afford a good parallel to the permanent conditions which govern Hindu society, where the encroachment of alien cultures has always been a constant danger to be guarded against. This vital objective of the twice-born leaders, who practically represented the whole people, therefore runs as a steady undercurrent through our society. The problem of keeping its civilization pure having been acknowledged as all-important, and its solution thus sought by India, her society has had to claim of its members the severe and permanent curbing of their individual liberty of choice and action.

Indian society, however, did not reach this stage all at once. It was gradually evolved through successive adaptations to changing circumstances. Meanwhile many relics of earlier stages survived into the later. Therefore Manu had to recognize, in his treatise, different other forms of marriage, such as the *Gāndharva* (by mutual choice), *Rākshasa* (by conquest), *Asur* (by purchase), *Paishācha* (by taking advantage of helplessness). In none of these is the social will manifest, but only the desire of the individual; for force whether of arms, or money, or circumstances, is arrogant and passion refuses to submit to extraneous considerations. But, while recording these forms, Manu censured them.

Though the Gāndharva marriage, founded on mutual attraction, was also one of those which did not find favour with the Lawgiver, it nevertheless long persisted in Indian society, as our epics and other literature make clear. This only shows that, however conservatively stable a society may be, the principle of stability cannot be equally strong amongst all the classes which it comprises. In the Kshatriya character, especially, the cultivation of self-suppression was least likely to attain its fullest development. It is not possible to keep confined in a complex net of social obligations the warrior spirit which ever seeks fresh fields for expansion. It is for this reason that our *shāstras* prohibited the crossing of the sea. Any adventurous activity whatsoever, that may loosen our mind from its mooring and disturb the fixed habit of our thought and belief and behaviour, is bound to undermine the very foundation of our society.

Not only sea voyage, but also residence in foreign countries with antagonistic social ideals, was prohibited and penalised. In the West we find now-a-days all kinds of forcible attempts being made to prevent the intrusion of Bolshevic ideas. This is comparable with our prohibition of foreign travel. No penalty is deemed too severe if it but keep in check the propaganda which, it is apprehended, may destroy the elements essential for the stability of the orthodox Western social system. The liberty of the people form their own opinions, to regulate their own conduct, is here no longer respected. The terrorist organization called Fascism, which seems to be daily gaining ground in Europe, is the exact counterpart of our rigorous social injunctions. There was a day in India when for the Sudra to aspire to the path of the Brahmin entailed the death penalty. The same psychological phenomenon is seen in the West in the cruel forms of Lynching, Fascism, Ku-Klux-Klanism, and the like.

It is no doubt conducive to a certain strength if all the members of a society are, in the main, moulded in accordance with some uniform standard. That may be a bar to the fullest development of its individuals, but it certainly does help to keep the society, as a whole, in a state of stable equilibrium. And, if any society, on the cessation of its growth, should come to pride itself on being, not like a growing tree, but like a temple of which its securely established immoveableness is its gory, it will inevitably feel the moving of a single one of its bricks to be a loss. Nevertheless it is not possible to keep all the members of any society uniformly bound in such unalterable fixity—that is against the nature of man and destructive of the principle of life itself. So that, so long as any people is vigorously alive, they or some of them cannot but keep breaking through the rules and prohibitions imposed by their society. Both in its biological and sociological phases, these opposing forces of conservation and experimentation, are characteristic of Life.

Anyhow, so long as the Kshatriyas were real Kshatriyas it was not found possible to keep them rigorously bound down to the habitual performance of the prescribed rules for daily observance. That is why, in the history of ancient India, at the bottom of all the social and religious revolutions, were the Kshatriyas. We must remember that Buddha was a Kshatriya that Mahāvīra was a Kshatriya; and that the clan, to which Srīkrishna himself belonged, was not famous for observing the precepts and prohibitions most esteemed by the Lawgivers. As we read through the Mahābhārata, we are reminded at every turn that, however determined may have been the endeavour to protect society behind a permanent embankment, there was not a single kingly clan of note which did not break through the walls. It was only in comparatively recent times, when the Kshatriyas had lost their virility and the Brahmins had gained almost unquestioned ascendancy, that it became possible to make the social bonds so rigorously inert.

Manu gives the name of *Gāndharva* to marriage by mutual choice, and signifies his disapprobation by stigmatising it as 'born of desire.' The way to marriage, which is shown by the torchlight of passion, has not for its goal the welfare of society, but the satisfaction of desire. Even in Europe, where the obligation of the individual to society is much lighter, it is well known how the mingling of the sexes under the impulse of passion often gives rise to anti-social difficulties; but there, society being mobile, the effects are not so deep as with us. In our *shāstras*, therefore, the *Brāhma* marriage is considered to be the best. According to this, the bride should be given to a man who had not solicited her. If the institution of marriage has to be regulated strictly from the social standpoint, room cannot be found for the personal wishes of the people concerned. So, the system which obtains in the case of the Royal Houses of Europe, is the system which prevails throughout Hindu society.

Another way for the better understanding by the European of the mentality underlying our marriage system, would be by reference to the discussions on eugenics, which are a feature of modern Europe. The science of Eugenics, like all other sciences, attaches but little weight to personal

sentiment. According to it, selection by personal inclination must be rigorously regulated for the sake of the progeny. If the principle involved be once admitted, marriage needs must be rescued from the control of the heart, and brought under the province of the intellect, otherwise insoluble problems will keep on arising; for passion recks not consequences, nor brooks interference by outside judges.

To return to our Kshatriyas, they were, as I have indicated, not in the habit of observing with any strictness the social rules relating to marriage. But it becomes clear from the poems of Kalidas, that there was a struggle of protest in his mind against this laxity of their observance. The Poet keenly felt the value of the eugenic restrictions which were directed towards maintaining the racial ideals pure, and yet his heart could not fail to be moved by the beauty of the play of the natural loves of man and woman against the background of the exuberance of the Universal Life. In most of the great works of Kalidas are treated the conflict of these opposites. The coming of the line of the Bhāratas was a great event in the History of India. But though the prelude of unbridled desire, which ushered in the founder of the line, has been viewed by the Poet in its aspect of Beauty in the first part of the play, he has corrected it from the standpoint of the Good towards the conclusion.

Amidst the natural beauty of the forest hermitage, Sakuntalā's youth blossoms out in prodigal curves of body and mind, along with the ecstasy of form and movement in the flowering trees and creepers around her. Everywhere in this retreat does Nature beckon, but Society, as yet, has found no loophole through which to obtrude the warning of her uplifted finger. Sakuntalā's secret union with King Dushyanta, which takes place amidst these surroundings, is not in harmony with the rest of society. So, according to the Poet, the curse comes upon her. She overlooks, in her self-absorption, the duty of hospitality; for when Nature is busy securing any special purpose, she throws all other purposes into the background. Society thereupon exacts its penalty and, in the Kings' audience hall, the inevitable thunderbolt of insult and rejection falls upon Sakuntalā.

In the seventh Act, the picture which the Poet draws of the hermitage, in which is consummated King Dushyanta's final union with Sakuntalā, now purified by discipline, is everywhere full of the rigour of renunciation, eclipsing the life-play of Nature. In the opening scene, the King is informed that the *Rishi* is busy expounding the *dharma* of the wifely estate Sakuntalā, here, is seen as the emblem of devotion, the Mother. It is clear that the Poet's object was vividly to contrast these two pictures of the relations of woman to man, the one carrying the bondage of desire, the other the detachment of *dharma*.

Motherhood, in so far as it is concerned with the physical nurture of offspring, is not essentially different in man and the lower animals, being a function of biological, not of sociological life, governed by instincts which are of nature, not by man's own creative power. But where the mother undergoes voluntary penance for the elevation of the human race, keeping her natural instincts in rigorous subordination to the dictates of mind and soul, there

indeed is her own creative power at work. Now-a-days in the West, we often find women feeling a certain degradation in becoming subject to Maternity; that is to say, they feel the insult of having to submit to this tyranny of Nature over their sex. But the way for woman to avoid such insult is not by abjuring Motherhood, but by making it subserve her ideal, by bringing it under the control of her own intellect and conscience. How far India's conscious activity in the past—this striving of hers for the best possible progeny—was fully consonant with the conclusions of modern science, is not the question here. The point is, that just by such intellectual and spiritual vigilance can the human Mother achieve her true dignity.

In his Kumāra-sambhava it is the same thing that the Poet tells us. There he has shown the divine aspect of the eternal love of man and woman. When the Titans have won paradise, and banished the gods therefrom, the love of man and woman, transformed into ascetic striving, wins back heaven from the insult of defeat. The gods are eternally awaiting the birth of Kumāra, the conqueror of evil. And, in order to achieve this birth, the passion of desire must be transmuted into pure, disciplined endeavour. The rigorous aspect of such achievement is the truth which is beauty. The beauty of Illusion is gorgeous in its adornment, the beauty of Freedom is naked.

In all the three of his works, the Raghu-vamsa, the Kumāra-sambhava and Sakuntalā, India's Poet has looked upon marriage as a state of discipline, not intended for gaining individual happiness but of which the method is the control of desire and the object to bring about the birth of the Slayer of Evil, the super-man who will make possible the achievement of heaven on earth. The agony of the Poet which we glimpse in each of these, springs from his consciousness of the degeneracy which was overtaking society through the flagrant disregard by the Kshatriya kings of the Aryan ideal of marriage. And the Poet sends out his call to bring away the union of man and woman from the realm of Kandarpa (*Eros*) into the hermitage of Shiva, the Good. This Indian ideal of marriage can be much more vividly understood from the works of the Poet than from any Dharma-shāstra.

Here the question arises that, if desire be banished from the very threshold of marriage, how can love find any place in the wedded life? Those who have no true acquaintance with our country, and whose marriage system is entirely different, take it for granted that the Hindu marriage is loveless. But do we not know of our own knowledge how false is such conclusion?

If we accept the institution of marriage, we must also admit that no system can be devised to ensure that its original object shall remain true throughout the long period covered by the life of the wedded couple. That is why, both law and public opinion have to keep such vigilant watch from the outside. But when external compulsion tries to bind together those whom only mutual love can truly unite, it makes their relations inherently impure,—in fact, no greater insult can be offered to man. Yet, all over the civilized world, man submits even to this for the sake of the welfare of his children. So far, no society has been able to claim that it has arrived at a faultless solution of the difficulty. In

entering the married state we have all to make our plunge into the doubtful and leave it to providence whether we shall sink, or swim through.

The 'desire,' however, against which India's solution of the marriage problem declared war, is one of Nature's most powerful fighters; consequently, the question of how to overcome it was not an easy one. There is a particular age, said India, at which this attraction between the sexes reaches its height, so if marriage is to be regulated according to the social will, it must be finished with before such age. Hence the Indian custom of early marriage.

This brings to my mind the conversation I once had with an Agriculturist. I was complaining to him of the lack of common grazing grounds in our villages, whereupon he told me that it was a mistake to suppose that a cow would thrive best if allowed to graze at will. Scientific feeding with specially cultivated fodder-crops could only yield the best results. These must have been the lines of argument, in regard to married love, pursued in our country. For the purpose of marriage, spontaneous love is unreliable, its proper cultivation should yield the best results,—such was the conclusion,—and this cultivation should begin before marriage. Therefore from their earliest years, the husband as an idea, is held up before our girls, in verse and story, through ceremonial and worship. When at length they get this 'husband', he is to them not a person but a principle, like Loyalty, Patriotism, or such other abstractions which owe their immense strength to the fact that the best part of them is our own creation and therefore part of our inner being.

There is also in our society the glorification of the *Sati*, the ideal wife; and, accordingly, a real reverence for woman, as the embodiment of housewifely virtues, is not rare in our country. The idea was, in both cases, to replace the natural passion of sexual love by the cultivated emotion of wedded love. But, it must be admitted that woman being emotional by nature, it has not been as easy for man thus to idealise the married state as it has been for her. It must also be admitted that the restraints and restrictions prescribed in the case of the man have not been so rigorous as those for the woman.

Therefore, in coming to our judgement on the marriage system of India, we must not fail to recognize the fact that therein the man and the woman are not on a footing of equality. Such inequality would have utterly humiliated her, but that, for the wife, the husband is an idea. She has not surrendered herself to the brute force of another, but voluntarily consecrated herself to the service of her own ideal. And if the husband is a man of sensitive soul the flame of this ideal love is transmitted to his own life also. Such mutual illumination it has often been our lot to witness.

There is yet another vital element in India's culture which we must keep in mind. In spite of her exaltation of the household estate, India did not look upon this as man's ultimate stage. Accoding to India's ideal, even the home must be given up in due course, in quest of the Infinite,—the household, in fact, is only to be set up as an important stage in this quest. Even to-day, we see our householders, when their children are grown up, leaving their home to spend the rest of their life in some place of pilgrimage. Here is another pair

of opposites which India attempted to reconcile. On the one hand, her civilization is essentially bound up in the home, albeit a home in which a wide circle of relationships find their place. On the other, its endeavour is, one by one, to snap all earthly ties in its pursuit of the liberation of the soul. In fact, it recognizes the social bonds because it is only through their acceptance that they can be transcended. In order to get rid of the natural desires of man, they must be used up; that is to say, guided by the spirit of renunciation to their own extinction. Here we find the difference between Hinduism and Buddhism. In its relations with Nature, Buddhism is uncompromisingly anarchist from the very outset.

The weakness of the Hindu system lies in the fact that its complex web is too closely knit, and that the least loosening of its fibre, in any of its parts, tends to its disruption. It is afraid of the contact of the outside because the bond which holds it together is that of external regulation, whose strength depends upon habitual conformity. But self-segregation for any society is no longer practicable in this age. For, while it may be possible to prevent the man on this side of the sea from crossing to the other, what about preventing those on the other side from coming over here?

So have alien ideas, alien systems, alien customs, breaking in through her embankments, dashed upon India in a multitudinous flood, making visible breaches in all the habits and beliefs which were the pillars of her social system. Further, apart from this disturbance of her inward life, there has been the more effective attack of an alien economic system; for without a sufficiency of food, it is impossible for the various relationships of her complex society to be kept together. And, just as foreign ideas come pouring in on our mental world, so do our foodstuffs, caught up in various currents of commerce, keep flowing away towards foreign lands. So that the people of our country, in their social dealings, are now compelled to keep careful count of their meagre resources. Lastly, there is the nemesis of the unrealized ideal, which overtakes any civilization when, by reason of flagging vitality, it fails in the earnestness of its pursuit, and lapses into the stagnation of mechanical habits. Every living organism is constantly confronted with the waste products of its own fatigue, for which its vital forces, while active, find natural means of elimination. The adoption of complex external devices is of no avail when vitality is on the wane, for they only tend to weaken the natural functions still further, if not to create new forms of weakness and disease. The civilizations which flourished for a time, and have disappeared, are those which committed suicide, clinging on to their own toxic products, by suppressing, under the urgence of their special purposes, the cleansing impulses provided by Nature.

Anyhow, the special qualities of head and heart, which once found varied support in our broad social system, are now dying out for lack of opportunity for their exercise; meanwhile it has not been possible to effect a corresponding change in the structure of our society; with the result, that while all its restrictions keep on hampering us, their original object and justification have become impossible of acknowledgement. And so, on every side, are the

members of this vast society overwhelmed with futility. In particular, the very basis of our marriage system having been undermined, there is no longer any harmony of adjustment between the underlying ideals and the actual facts of our modern marriages. One section of our people keeps crying out for a return of the *Satya-yuga*, but that golden age refuses to respond to their call. The time has, therefore, come for us to think out our problems afresh, to correlate our thoughts and conclusions with those of all humanity.

The gulf of separation, which Nature has contrived between the sexes, has preserved in its atmosphere the varied play of a powerful mutual attraction. This force which is creative,—but destructive as well,—continually sends its awakening message to our souls from behind the veil. If we screen off society from its forceful activity, that may conduce to its own safety, but will surely reduce it to passivity. In our language we call the power of woman over man by the name of *shakti*. Deprived of *shakti* the creative process in society languishes, and man, losing his vitality, becomes mechanical in his habits. In such case, though he may still retain many a passive quality, all energy of activity forsakes him. The manner in which the relations between the sexes have been regulated in our country, has left no room for the action of this *shakti*; for, as we have seen, our society, with immovable stability as its objective, has been busy cultivating the passive qualities, ever in dread of individual forcefulness. Now that our country has awakened to outside influences, she finds herself powerless to resist alien aggression. She has even lost the faculty of recognizing that her weakness proceeds from within her own social system, and is not the outcome of any outward accident.

In every society, its civilization is the territory conquered in its contest with Nature. And since in our country this contest was long and bitter, everywhere we find its fences more in evidence than its roads. But because there was once a good reason for this state of things, it does not help to save her when the reason has ceased to exist. Her barriers which kept the outsider off, now keep herself confined.

It seems that in the age which has now come upon us, man is thinking of giving up the desperate hope of victoriously keeping up this constant struggle. He would now make his peace with Nature,—and that duty has been entrusted to Science. But the marriage system of every society belongs to an age when, in the Parliament of Life, man was sitting on the opposition benches against Nature's government. And Nature has ever retaliated against his obstructive tactics. Up to now they have nowhere come to any satisfactory agreement. That is why these ubiquitous attempts at the external regulation of man's most intimate relations, have been insulting his best feelings and degrading the greatest of his institutions, all over the world.

Let me, as an individual Indian, offer in conclusion my own personal contribution to the discussion of the marriage question generally.

There are two parallel activities in the human world, the one which carries forward the stream of population: the other, the civilization of man. The first chiefly belongs to the realm of Life, and the second to that of Mind.

In the creation of progeny, man's part though essential, is secondary. After he has once roused the passive seed, in woman's keeping, to vital activity, all the travail of child-bearing and parturition are hers alone. It is because of this comparative lightness of the male function in the propagation of the species, that we find instances of the killing off of superfluous males in the insect world, and of the keeping down of the number of male beasts by internecine struggles due to the savage jealousy which is their characteristic; shewing the minor importance of this sex for the purpose of biological creation.

But, when Mind evolved itself into greatness, man found the opportunity to gain glory for his sex in the scheme of human development. For, while woman remained entangled in the specific duties which Life had assigned to her, man, with his greater freedom therefrom, was able to respond to the call of his intellect and engage in various work of creation in the world of Mind,—in fact he created the sphere of his own usefulness. In this, the first chapter of civilization, when Mind was in the ascendant, woman in her turn dropped into the second place, not only as less useful, but even as an actual impediment; for the world which was her special creation, constantly sought to throw its toils round the adventurous spirit of man as well. This comparative unimportance of woman in the birth stage of civilization, clings to her still. That is why the rebellious section of womankind would curtail her responsibilities in the region of Life, in order to enable her to claim equality with man in the work of his creation of society.

Opportunities, however, cannot be artificially created. The propensities of heart, strongly ingrained in woman's nature, cannot be dislodged by attacks from the outside. The tendency of these propensities of hers are towards holding fast, and not progressing onwards. So it is only by adherence to the cult of preservation that woman can attain her true welfare. If she desperately engages in adventurous pursuits, she will at every step come into conflict with her own inner nature, and thus constantly distracted, she can never succeed in competing with man in his own special sphere. But just as man, after a long period of subordination during the ascendancy of Life, was enabled to get rid of his disabilities in a subsequent stage, so woman too may look forward to a yet higher regime whereunder she will have the right to emerge from her present subjection. It is difficult to decide what to call this next stage; for the word '*spiritual*' is so beset with controversy regarding its true meaning. However, let me for my present purpose give it that name.

The inner qualities of the woman's heart, result in an important by-product, which may be called *charm*. This charm like light, is a force. Intangible, imponderable though it be, the strivings of our intellect may not attain fruition if deprived of its life-giving touch. The nourishment which the tree draws though its roots may be classified and measured,—not so the vitality which is the gift of the sunlight, and without which its functioning becomes altogether impossible.

This ineffable emanation of woman's nature has, from the first, played its part in the creations of man, unobtrusively but inevitably. Had man's mind

not been energised by the inner working of woman's vital charm, he would never have attained his successes. Of all the higher achievements of civilization,—the devotion of the toiler, the valour of the brave, the creations of the artist,—the secret spring is to be found in woman's influence. In the clash and battle of primitive civilization, the action of woman's *shakti* is not clearly manifest; but, as civilization becomes spiritual in the course of its development, and the union of man with man is acknowledged to be more important than the differences between them, the charm of woman gets the opportunity to become the predominant factor. Such spiritual civilization can only be upheld if the emotion of woman and the intellect of man are contributed in usual shares for its purposes. Then their respective contributions may combine gloriously in ever-fresh creations, and their difference will no longer make for inequality.

Woman, let me repeat, has two aspects,—in one she is the Mother; in the other, the Beloved. I have already spoken of the spiritual endeavour that characterises the first, viz., the striving, not merely for giving birth to her child, but for creating the best possible child,—not as an addition to the number of men, but as one of the heroic souls who may win victory in man's eternal fight against evil in his social life and natural surroundings. As the Beloved, it is woman's part to infuse life into all the aspirations of man; and the spiritual power that enables her to do so I have called *charm*, and was known in India by the name of *shakti*.

There is a poem called *Ānanda-laharī* (The stream of Delight), attributed to Shankarāchārya. She who is glorified therein is the *Shakti* in the heart of the Universe, the Giver of Joy, the Inspirer of Activity. On the one hand, we know and use the world; on the other we are related to it by ties of disinterested joy. We can know the world because it is a manifestation of Truth: we rejoice in it because it is an expression of Joy. 'Who would have striven for life,' says the *Rishi*, 'if this *ānanda* (joy) had not filled the sky.' It seems to me that the 'Intellectual Beauty', whose praises Shelley has sung, is identical with this *Āānanda*. And it is this same *ānanda* which the poet of *ānanda-laharī* has visualised as the woman; that is to say, in his view, this Universal *Shakti* is manifest in human Society in the nature of Woman. In this manifestation is her charm. Let no one confuse this *shakti* with mere 'sweetness', for in this charm there is a combination of several qualities,—patience, self-abnegation, sensitive intelligence, grace in thought, word and behaviour,—the reticent expression of rhythmic life, the tenderness and terribleness of love; at its core, moreover, is that self-radiant Spirit of Delight which ever gives itself up.

This *shakti*, this joy-giving power of woman as the Beloved, has up to now largely been dissipated by the greed of man, who has sought to use it for the purposes of his individual enjoyment, corrupting it, confining it, like his property, within jealously-guarded limits. That has also obstructed for woman herself her inward realization of the full glory of her own *shakti*. Her personality has been insulted at every turn by being made to display its power of delectation within a circumscribed arena. It is because she has not found her

true place in the great world, that she sometimes tries to capture man's special estate as a desperate means of coming into her own. But it is not by coming out of her home that woman can gain her liberty. Her liberation can only be effected in a society where her true *shakti*, her ā*nanda*, is given the widest and highest scope for its activity. Man has already achieved the means of self-expansion in public activity without giving up his individual concerns. When, likewise, any society shall be able to offer a larger field for the creative work of woman's special faculty, without detracting from her creative work in the home, then in such society will the true union of man and woman become possible.

The marriage system all over the world, from the earliest ages till now, is a barrier in the way of such true union. That is why woman's *shakti*, in all existing societies, is so shamefully wasted and corrupted. That is why, in every country marriage is still more or less of a prison house for the confinement of woman,—with all its guards wearing the badge of the dominant male. That is why man, by dint of his efforts to bind woman, has made her the strongest of fetters for his own bondage. That is why woman is debarred from adding to the spiritual wealth of society by the perfection of her own nature, and all human societies are weighed down with the burden of the resulting poverty.

The civilization of man has not, up to now, loyally recognized the reign of the Spirit. Therefore the married state is still one of the most fruitful sources of the unhappiness and downfall of man, of his disgrace and humiliation. But those who believe that society is a manifestation of the spirit, will assuredly not rest in their endeavours till they have rescued human marriage relations from outrage by the brute forces of society,—till they have thereby given free play to the force of Love in all the concerns of humanity.

1925

THE CULT OF THE CHARKA

ACHARYA PRAFULLA CHANDRA RAY has marked me with his censure in printer's ink, for that I have been unable to display enthusiasm in the turning of the Charka. But because it is impossible for him to be pitiless to me, even when awarding punishment, he has provided me with a companion in my ignominy in the illustrious person of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal. That has taken away the pain of it, and also given me fresh proof of the eternal human truth, that we are in agreement with some people and with some others we are not. It only proves that while creating man's mind, God did not have for his model the spider mentality doomed to a perpetual conformity in its production of web and that it is an outrage upon human nature to force it through a mill and reduce it to some standardised commodity of uniform size and shape and purpose.

When in my younger days I used to go boating on the river, the boatmen of Jagannath Ghat would swarm around, each pressing on me the service of his own particular vessel. My selection once made, however, there would be no further trouble; for, if the boats were many, so were the passengers; and the places to go to were likewise various. But suppose one of the boats had been specially hall-marked, as the one and only sacred ferry by some dream emanating from the shrine of Tarakeswar, then indeed it would have been difficult to withstand the extortion of its touts, despite the inner conviction of the travellers that though the shore opposite may be one, its landing places are many and diversely situate.

Our *shastras* tell us that the divine *shakti* is many-sided, so that a host of different factors operate in the work of creation. In death these merge into sameness; for chaos alone is uniform. God has given to man the same many-sided *shakti*, for which reason the civilizations of his creation have their divine wealth of diversity. It is God's purpose that in the societies of man the various should be strung together into a garland of unity; while often the mortal providence of our public life, greedy for particular results, seeks to knead them all into a lump of uniformity. That is why we see in the concerns of this world so many identically-liveried, machine-made workers, so many marionettes pulled by the same string: and on the other hand, wherever the human spirit has not been reduced to the coldness of collapse, we also see perpetual rebelliousness against this mechanical, mortar-pounded homogeneity.

If in any country we find no symptom of such rebellion, if we find its people submissively or contentedly prone on the dust, in dumb terror of some master's bludgeon, or blind acceptance of some *guru's* injunction, then indeed should we know that for such a country, *in extremis*, it is high time to mourn.

In our country this ominous process of being levelled down into sameness has long been at work. Every individual of every caste has his function assigned to him, together with the obsession into which he has been hypnotised, that,

since he is bound by some divine mandate, accepted by his first ancestor, it would be sinful for him to seek relief therefrom. This imitation of the social scheme of ant-life makes very easy the performance of petty routine duties, but specially difficult the attainment of manhood's estate. It imparts skill to the limbs of the man who is a bondsman, whose labour is drudgery; but it kills the mind of a man who is a doer, whose work is creation. So in India, during long ages past, we have the spectacle of only a repetition of that which has gone before.

In the process of this continuous grind India has acquired a distaste for very existence. In dread of the perpetuation of this same grind, through the eternal repetition of births, she is ready to intern all mental faculties in absolute inaction in order to cut at the root of *Karma* itself. For only too well has she realized, in the dreary round of her daily habit, the terribleness of this ever-lasting re-canitulation. Moreover, this dreariness is not the only loss sustained by those who have suffered themselves to be reduced to a machine-like existence; for they have also lost all power to combat aggression or exploitation. From age to age they have been assaulted by the strong, defrauded by the cunning, and deluded by the *gurus* to whom their conscience was surrendered. Such a state of abject passivity has become easy because of the teaching that through an immutable decree of providence they have been set adrift on the sea of Time, upon the raft of a monotonous living death, burdened with a vocation that makes no allowance for variation in human nature.

But whatever our *shastras* may or may not have said, this popular conception of the Creator's doing is the very opposite of what he really did do to man at the moment of his creation. Instead of furnishing him with an automatically revolving grindstone, God slipped into his constitution that most lively sprightly thing called Mind. And unless man can be made to get rid of this mind, it will remain impossible to convert him into a machine. In so far as the men at the top succeeded in paralysing the people's minds by fear, or greed or hypnotic texts, they succeeded in extorting, from one class of them, only textiles from their looms; from another class, only pots from their wheels; from a third, only oil from their mills. Now when from such persons as these it becomes necessary to demand the application of their mind to any big work on hand, they stand aghast. 'Mind!' cry they, 'What on earth is that? Why don't you order us what to do and give some text for us to repeat from mouth to mouth and age to age?'

Our mind, in doing duty only as a hedge to prevent the encroachment of living ideas, had been kept evenly clipped short for the purpose. If, in spite of that, in this age of self-assertion, we find mischievous branches trying to make room for the disturbance of the spruceness of the trimming,—if all our minds refuse incessantly to reverberate some one set *mantram*, in the droning chirp of the cicadas of the night,—let no one be annoyed or alarmed; for only because of this does the attainment of Swaraj become thinkable!

That is why I am not ashamed,—though there is every reason to be

afraid,—to admit that the depths of my mind have not been moved by the *charka* agitation. This may be counted by many as sheer presumption on my part. They may even wax abusive; for swearing is a much needed relief for the feelings when even one stray fish happens to elude the all-embracing net. Still I cannot help hoping that there are others who are in the same plight as myself,—though it is difficult to find them all out. For even where hands are reluctant to work the spindle, mouths are all the more busy spinning its praises.

I am strongly of opinion that all intense pressure of persuasion brought upon the crowd psychology is unhealthy for it. Some strong and widespread intoxication of belief among a vast number of men can suddenly produce a convenient uniformity of purpose immense and powerful. It seems for the moment a miracle of a wholesale conversion; and a catastrophic phenomenon of this nature stuns our rational mind, raising high some hope of easy realization which is very much like a boom in the business market. The amazingly immediate success is no criterion of its reality,—the very dimension of its triumph having a dangerous effect of producing a sudden and universal eclipse of our judgment. Human nature has its elasticity; and in the name of urgency, it can be forced towards a particular direction far beyond its normal and wholesome limits. But the rebound is sure to follow, and the consequent disillusionment will leave behind it a desert track of demoralisation. We have had our experience of this in the tremendous exultation lately produced by the imaginary easy prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity. And therefore I am afraid of a blind faith on a very large scale in the *charka*, in a country which is so liable to succumb to the lure of short cuts when pointed out by a personality about whose moral earnestness they can have no doubt.

Anyhow, what I say is this. If, today, poverty has come upon our country, we should know that the root cause is complexly ramified and it dwells within ourselves. For the whole country to fall upon only one of its external symptoms with the application of one and the same remedy, will not serve to fight the demon away. If man had been a mindless image of stone, a defect in his features might have been cured with hammer and chisel; but when his shrunken features bespeak vital poverty, the cure must be constitutional, not formal; and repeated hammer strokes upon some one particular external point will only damage that same life still more.

In the days when our country had to bear the brunt of Moghul and Pathan, the little jerry-built edifices of Hindu sovereignty fell to pieces on every side. There was then no dearth of home-spun thread, but that did not serve to bind these into stability. And, yet, in those days, there was no economic antagonism between the people and their rulers. The throne of the latter was established on the soil of the country, so that the ripe fruits fell to the ground where the tree stood. Can it then be today—when we have not one or two kings, but a veritable flood of them, sweeping away our life-stuffs across the seas away from our motherland, causing it to lose both its fruits and its fertility,—can it be, I say, that the lack of sufficient thread prevents our

stemming this current? Is it not rather our lack of vitality, our lack of union?

Some will urge that though in the days of Moghul and Pathan we had not sovereign power, we had at least a sufficiency of food and clothing. When the river is not flowing, it may be possible to bank up little pools in its bed to hold water enough for our needs, conveniently at hand for each. But can such banks guarding our scanty economic resources for local use withstand the shocks which come upon it today from far and near? No longer will it be possible to hide ourselves away from commerce with the outside world; moreover such isolation itself would be the greatest of deprivations for us. If, therefore, we cannot rouse the forces of our mind, in adequate strength, to take our due part in this traffic of exchanging commodities, our grain will continue to be consumed by others, leaving only the chaff as our own portion. In Bengal we have a nursery rhyme which soothes the infant with the assurance that it will get the lollipop if only it twirls its hands. But is it a likely policy to reassure grown-up people by telling them that they will get their Swaraj,—that is to say, get rid of all poverty, in spite of their social habits that are a perpetual impediment and mental habits producing inertia of intellect and will,—by simply twirling away with their hands? No! If we have to get rid of this poverty, which is visible outside, it can only be done by rousing our inward forces of wisdom, of fellowship and mutual trust which make for co-operation.

But it may be argued, does not external work react on the mind? It does, only if it has its constant suggestions to our intellect, which is the master, and not merely its commands for our muscles, which are slaves. In this clerk-ridden country, for instance, we all know that the routine of clerkship is not mentally stimulating. By doing the same thing day after day mechanical skill may be acquired; but the mind, like a mill-turning bullock, will be kept going round and round a narrow range of habit. That is why, in every country, man has looked down on work which involves this kind of mechanical repetition. Carlyle may have proclaimed the dignity of labour in his stentorian accents, but a still louder cry has gone up from humanity, age after age, testifying to its indignity. 'The wise man sacrifices the half to avert a total loss',—so says our Sanskrit proverb. Rather than die of starvation, one can understand a man preferring to allow his mind to be killed. But it would be a cruel joke to try to console him by talking of the dignity of such sacrifice.

In fact, humanity has ever been beset with the grave problem, how to rescue the large majority of the people from being reduced to the stage of machines. It is my belief that all the civilizations which have ceased to be, have come by their death when the mind of the majority got killed under some pressure by the minority; for the truest wealth of man is his mind. No amount of respect outwardly accorded, can save man from the inherent ingloriousness of labour divorced from mind. Only those who feel that they have become inwardly small can be belittled by others, and the numbers of the higher castes have ever dominated over those of the lower, not because they have any accidental advantage of power, but because the latter are themselves humbly conscious of their dwarfed humanity. If the cultivation of science by Europe

has any moral significance, it is in its rescue of man from outrage by nature,—not its use of man as a machine, but its use of the machine to harness the forces of nature in man's service. One thing is certain, that the all-embracing poverty which has overwhelmed our country cannot be removed by working with our hands to the neglect of science. Nothing can be more undignified drudgery than that man's *knowing* should stop dead and his *doing* go on for ever.

It was a great day for man when he discovered the wheel. The facility of motion thus given to inert matter enabled it to bear much of man's burden. This was but right, for Matter is the true Sudra; while with his dual existence in body and mind, Man is a *Dwija*. Man has to maintain both his inner and outer life. Whatever functions he cannot perform by material means, are left as an additional burden on himself, bringing him to this extent down to the level of matter, and making him a Sudra. Such Sudras cannot obtain glory by being merely glorified in words.

Thus, whether in the shape of the spinning wheel, or the potters' wheel, or the wheel of a vehicle, the wheel has rescued innumerable men from the Sudra's estate and lightened their burdens. No wealth is greater than this lightening of man's material burdens. This fact man has realized ever more and more, since the time when he turned his first wheel; for his wealth has thereupon gone on compounding itself in ever-increasing rotation, refusing to be confined to the limited advantage of the original *charka*.

Is there no permanent truth underlying these facts? One aspect of Vishnu's *shakti* is the *padma*, the beautiful lotus; another is the *chakra*, the moveable discus. The one is the complete ideal of perfection, the other is the process of movement, the ever-active power seeking fulfilment. When man attained touch with this moving *shakti* of Vishnu, he was liberated from that inertia which is the origin of all poverty. All divine power is infinite. Man has not yet come to the end of the power of the revolving wheel. So, if we are taught that in the pristine *charka* we have exhausted all the means of spinning thread, we shall not gain the full favour of Vishnu. Neither will his spouse Lakshmi smile on us. When we forget that science is spreading the domain of Vishnu's *chakra*, those who have honoured the Discus-Bearer to better purpose will spread their dominion over us. If we are wilfully blind to the grand vision of whirling forces, which science has revealed, the *charka* will cease to have any message for us. The hum of the spinning-wheel, which once carried us so long a distance on the path of wealth, will no longer talk to us of progress.

Some have protested that they never preached that only the turning of the *charka* should be engaged in. But they have not spoken of any other necessary work. Only one means of attaining *Swaraj* has been definitely ordered and the rest is a vast silence. Does not such silence amount to a speech stronger than any uttered word? Is not the *charka* thrust out against the background of this silence into undue prominence? Is it really so big as all that? Has it really the divinity which may enable it to appropriate the single-minded devotion of all the millions of India, despite their diversity of temperament and talent? Repeated efforts, even unto violence and bloodshed, have been

made, all the world over, to bring mankind together on the basis of the common worship of a common Deity, but even these have not been successful. Neither has a common God been found, nor a common form of worship. Can it then be expected, that, in the shrine of *Swaraj*, the *charka* goddess will attract to herself alone the offerings of every devotee? Surely such expectation amounts to a distrust of human nature, a disrespect for India's people.

In my childhood, I had an up-country servant, called Gopee, who used to tell us how once he went to Puri on a pilgrimage, and was at a loss what fruit to offer to Jagannath, since any fruit so offered could not be eaten by him any more. After repeatedly going over the list of edible fruits known to him, he suddenly bethought himself of the tomato (which had very little fascination for him) and the tomato it was which he offered, never having reason to repent of such clever abnegation. But to call upon man to make the easiest of offerings to the smallest of gods is the greatest of insults to his manhood. To ask all the millions of our people to spin the *charka* is as bad as offering the tomato to Jagannath. I do hope and trust that there are not thirty-three crores of Gopees in India. When man receives the call of the great to make some sacrifice, he is indeed exalted; for then he comes to himself with a start of revelation,—to find that he too has been bearing his hidden resource of greatness.

Our country is the land of rites and ceremonials, so that we have more faith in worshipping the feet of the priest than the Divinity whom he serves. We cannot get rid of the conviction that we can safely cheat our inner self of its claims, if we can but bribe some outside agency. This reliance on outward help is a symptom of slavishness, for no habit can more easily destroy all reliance on self. Only to such a country can come the *charka* as the emblem of her deliverance; and the people dazed into obedience by some specious temptation go on turning their *charka* in the seclusion of their corners, dreaming all the while that the car of *Swaraj* of itself rolls onward in triumphal progress at every turn of their wheel.

And so it becomes necessary to restate afresh the old truth that the foundation of *Swaraj* cannot be based on any external conformity, but only on the internal union of hearts. If a great union is to be achieved, its field must be great likewise. But it, out of the whole field of economic endeavour, only one fractional portion be selected for special concentration thereon, then we may get home-spun thread, and even genuine *khaddar*, but we shall not have united, in the pursuit of one great complete purpose, the lives of our countrymen.

In India, it is not possible for every one to unite in the realm of religion. The attempt to unite on the political platform is of recent growth, and will yet take long to permeate the masses. So that the religion of economics is where we should above all try to bring about this union of ours. It is certainly the largest field available to us; for here high and low, learned and ignorant, all have their scope. If this field cease to be one of warfare, if there we can prove, that not competition, but co-operation is the real truth, then indeed we can

reclaim from the hands of the Evil One an immense territory for the reign of peace and goodwill. It is important to remember, moreover, that this is the ground whereon our village communities had actually practised unity in the past. What if the thread of the old union has snapped? It may again be joined together; for such former practice has left in our character the potentiality of its renewal.

As is livelihood for the individual, so is politics for a particular people,—a field for the exercise of their business instincts of patriotism. All this time, just as business has implied antagonism, so has politics been concerned with the self-interest of a pugnacious nationalism. The forging of arms and of false documents has been its main activity. The burden of competitive armaments has been increasing apace, with no end to it in sight, no peace for the world in prospect.

When it becomes clear to man that in the co-operation of nations lies the true interest of each,—for man is established in mutuality—then only can politics become a field for true endeavour. Then will the same means which the individual recognizes as moral and therefore true, be also recognized as such by the nations. They will know that cheating, robbery and the exclusive pursuit of self aggrandisement are as harmful for the purposes of this world as they are deemed to be for those of the next. It may be that the League of Nations will prove to be the first step in the process of this realization.

Again, just as the present-day politics is a manifestation of extreme individualism in nations, so is the process of gaining a livelihood an expression of the extreme selfishness of individuals,. That is why man has descended to such depths of deceit and cruelty in his indiscriminate competition. And yet since man is man, even in his business he ought to have cultivated his humanity rather than the powers of exploitation. In working for his livelihood he ought to have earned not only his daily bread, but also his eternal truth.

When, years ago, I first became acquainted with the principles of co-operation in the field of business, one of the knots of a tangled problem which had long perplexed my mind seemed to have been unravelled. I felt that the separateness of self-interest, which had so long contemptuously ignored the claims of the truth of man, was at length to be replaced by a combination of common interests which would help to uphold that truth, proclaiming that poverty lay in the separation, and wealth in the union of man and man. For myself I had never believed that this original truth of man could find its limit in any region of his activity.

The co-operative principle tells us, in the field of man's livelihood, that only when he arrives at his truth can he get rid of his poverty,— not by any external means. And the manhood of man is at length honoured by the enunciation of this principle. Co-operation is an ideal, not a mere system, and therefore it can give rise to innumerable methods of its application. It leads us into no blind alley; for at every step it communes with our spirit. And so, it seemed to me, in its wake would come, not merely food, but the goddess of

plenty herself, in whom all kinds of material food are established in an essential moral oneness.

It was while some of us were thinking of the ways and means of adopting this principle in our institution that I came across the book called 'The National Being' written by that Irish idealist. A.E., who has a rare combination in himself of poetry and practical wisdom. There I could see a great concrete realization of the co-operative living of my dreams. It became vividly clear to me what varied results could flow therefrom, how full the life of man could be made thereby. I could understand how great the concrete truth was in any plane of life, the truth that in separation is bondage, in union is liberation. It has been said in the Upanishad that *Brahma* is reason, *Brahma* is spirit, but *Anna* also is *Brahma*, which means that Food also represents an eternal truth, and therefore through it we may arrive at a great realization, if we travel along the true path.

I know there will be many to tax me with indicating a solution of great difficulty. To give concrete shape to the ideal of co-operation on so vast a scale will involve endless toil in experiment and failure, before at length it may become an accomplished fact. No doubt it is difficult. Nothing great can be got cheap. We only cheat ourselves when we try to acquire things that are precious with a price that is inadequate. The problem of our poverty being complex, with its origin in our ignorance and unwisdom, in the inaptitude of our habits, the weakness of our character, it can only be effectively attacked by taking in hand our life as a whole and finding both internal and external remedies for the malady which afflicts it. How can there be an easy solution?

There are many who assert and some who believe that *Swaraj* can be attained by the *charka*; but I have yet to meet a person who has a clear idea of the process. That is why there is no discussion, but only quarrelling over the question. If I state that it is not possible to repel foreign invaders armed with guns and cannons by the indigenous bow and arrow, there will I suppose be still some to contradict me asking, 'Why not? It has already been said by some, Would not the foreigners be drowned, even if everyone of our three hundred and thirty millions were only to spit at them?' While not denying the fearsomeness of such a flood, or the efficacy of such a suggestion, for throwing odium on foreign military science, the difficulty which my mind feels to be insuperable is that you can never get all these millions even to spit in unison. It is too simple for human beings. The same difficulty applies to the *charka* solution.

The disappointments, the failures, the recommencements that Sir Horace Plunkett had to face when he set to work to apply the co-operative principle in the economic reconstruction of Ireland, are a matter of history. But though it takes time to start a fire, once alight it spreads rapidly. That is the way with truth as well. In whatever corner of the earth it may take root, the range of its seeds is world-wide, and everywhere they may find soil for growth and give of their fruit to each locality. Sir Horace Plunkett's success was not confined to

Ireland alone; he achieved also the possibility of success for India. If any true devotee of our motherland should be able to eradicate the poverty of only one of her villages, he will have given permanent wealth to the thirty-three crores of his countrymen. Those who are wont to measure truth by its size get only an outside view, and fail to realize that each seed, in its tiny vital spark, brings divine authority to conquer the whole world.

As I am writing this, a friend objects that even though I may be right in thinking that the *charka* is not competent to bring us *Swaraj*, or remove the whole of our poverty, why ignore such virtues as it admittedly possesses? Every farmer, every house-holder, has a great deal of leisure left over after his ordinary work is done; so that if everyone would utilise such spare time in productive work, much could be done towards the alleviation of our poverty. Why not glorify the *charka* as one of the instruments of such a desirable consummation? This reminds me of a similar proposition I have heard before. Most of our people throw away the water in which their rice is boiled. If everyone conserved this nutritious fluid that would go a long way to solve the food problem. I admit there is truth in this contention. The slight change of taste required for eating boiled rice with its water retained should not be very difficult to acquire, in view of the object sought to be gained. Many other similar savings could be effected which are doubtless worth the effort and should be looked upon as a duty. But has any one ever suggested that the conservation of rice-water should be made a plank in the platform of *Swaraj*-work? And is there no good reason for the omission?

In order to make my point clear, let me take an instance from the case of religion. If a preacher should repeatedly and insistently urge that the drinking of water from any and every well is the cause of the degeneracy of our religion, then the chief objection to his teaching would be its tendency to debase the value of moral action as a factor in religion. No doubt there is the chance of some well or other containing impure water; impure water destroys health; a diseased body begets a diseased mind; and therefore spiritual welfare is in danger. I am not concerned to dispute the truth in all this, yet I must repeat that to give undue value to the comparatively unimportant, lowers the value of the important. And so we find that there are numbers of Hindus who would not hesitate even to kill a Mohamedan if he came to draw water from their own well. If the small be put on an equal footing with the big, it is not content to rest there, but needs must push its way higher up. That is how the injunction: 'Thou shalt not drink dubious water' gets the better of the commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill.' There is no end to the perversions of value which have thus weakened our minds, and it is only because we have become habituated to their facile intrusion that no one is surprised to see the *charka* stalk the land, with uplifted club, in the garb of *Swaraj* itself. The *charka* is doing harm because of the undue prominence which it has thus usurped, whereby it only adds fuel to the smouldering weakness that is eating into our vitals. Suppose some mighty voice should next proclaim that the rice-water waster must not be suffered to enter our councils. Given requisite forcefulness,

that may lead to the flow of rice-water being followed by the flow of human blood, in the sacred name of political purity. If the idea of the impurity of foreign textiles should effect a lodgement in our mind along with the numerous fixed ideas already there, in regard to the impurity of certain foods and waters, the Id riots, to which we are accustomed, might pale before the sanguinary strife that may eventually be set ablaze between the so-called unclean lot who may use foreign cloth and those politically pure souls who do not. The danger to my mind is that the contagion of 'untouchability,' which was hitherto confined to our society, may extend to the economic and political spheres as well.

Some one whispers to me that to combine in *charka*-spinning is co-operation itself. I beg to disagree. If all the higher caste people of the Hindu community combine in keeping their well-water undefiled from use of the lower ones, this practice in itself does not give it the dignity of Bacteriology. It is a particular action isolated from the comprehensive vision of this science. And therefore while we keep our wells reserved for the cleaner sect, we allow our ponds to get polluted, the ditches round our houses to harbour messengers of death. Those who intimately know Bengal also know that at the time of preparing a special kind of pickle our women take extra precaution in keeping themselves clean. In fact they go through a kind of ceremonial of ablution and other forms of purification. For such extra care their pickle survives the ravage of time, while their villages are devastated by epidemics. For while there may remain some Pasteur's law invisible at the depth of this pickle-making precaution, the diseased spleens in the neighbourhood make themselves only too evident by their magnitude. The universal application of Pasteur's law in the production of pickle has some similarity to the application of the principle of a co-operation method of livelihood in turning the spinning-wheel. It may produce enormous quantity of yarn, but the blind suppression of intellect which guards our poverty in its dark dungeon will remain inviolate. This narrow activity will shed light only upon one detached piece of fact keeping its great background of truth densely dark.

It is extremely distasteful to me to have to differ from Mahatma Gandhi in regard to any matter of principle or method. Not that, from a higher standpoint, there is anything wrong in so doing: but my heart shrinks from it. For what could be a greater joy than to join hands in the field of work with one for whom one has such love and reverence? Nothing is more wonderful to me than Mahatmaji's great moral personality. In him divine providence has given us a burning thunderbolt of *shakti*. May this *shakti* give power to India,—not overwhelm her,—that is my prayer! The difference in our standpoints and temperaments has made the Mahatma look upon Rammohan Roy as a pygmy, while I revere him as a giant. The same difference makes the Mahatma's field of work one which my conscience cannot accept as its own. That is a regret which will abide with me always. It is, however, God's will that man's paths of endeavour shall be various, else why these differences of mentality?

How often have my personal feelings of regard strongly urged me to

accept at Mahatma Gandhi's hands my enlistment as a follower of the *charka* cult, but as often have my reason and conscience restrained me, lest I should be a party to the raising of the *charka* to a higher place than is its due, thereby distracting attention from other more important factors in our task of all-round reconstruction. I feel sure that Mahatmaji himself will not fail to understand me, and keep for me the same forbearance, which he has always had. Acharya Roy, I also believe, has respect for independence of opinion, even when unpopular; so that, although when carried away by the fervour of his own propaganda he may now and then give me a scolding, I doubt not he retains for me a soft corner in his heart. As for my countrymen, the public,—accustomed as they are to drown, under the facile flow of their minds, both past services and past disservices done to them,—if today they cannot find it in their hearts to forgive, they will forget to-morrow. Even if they do not,–if for me their displeasure is fated to be permanent, then just as to-day I have Acharya Seal as my fellow-culprit, so to-morrow I may find at my side persons rejected by their own country whose radiance reveals the black unreality of any stigma of popular disapprobation.

1925

JUDGMENT

THE YOUNG generation of men in the East are everywhere attracted by what they imagine is modern. And they have convinced themselves that Western life is modern. They are seeking from its manners and mentality the magic formula of how to grow modern. They believe that what is called modern represents the principle of indefinite growth and freedom,—it is youth, it is life.

If that is the definition of modern, then we must know that its essential element does not consist in a particular time, but in a particular truth, lacking which a thing of the latest pattern and polish may in reality be out of date and condemned to perish. A number of nations have so perished who were too late in realizing that the raft of time, to which they clung believing it to be modern, had already become of the past. Are we sure that the same thing has not happened to the West, and that the atmosphere of turmoil which we find there is not due to the conflict between, their present history, which is no longer modern, and the messenger of the future, which was come with its sovereign claim?

Even the paling darkness of the dawn is immensely distant from the morning light, though they are in immediate contact; and who knows if the present history of the West is not already as old as the day of the deluge?

All that is deeply human is never old. It has the perpetual freshness of imperishable life. Only the acquisitiveness which is not of growth but of hoarding, the cleverness which wins in the game of life with false cards up its sleeve, is crabbed and wrinkled. The business of slave hunting, however up to date in form and profitable in practice, is old; cannibalism, crude or subtle, direct or indirect, with Christian surname or heathen, is never modern, not even in its beginning.

How can we ever believe that the spirit of the hungry Nation from the west, which for over a century has robbed and humiliated us in the eastern hemisphere, has found the secret of everlasting life in its reckless power? Have we lost all faith in the teaching of the wise: that the passions which mock the eternal and things that defiantly grow out of proportion with their surroundings, can never be lasting?

However that may be, the fact cannot be denied that the outstanding feature of the present age is the way of which the West has spread its physical dominance over the whole world, and is still imposing its mind upon other continents. All the great countries of the East, in some period or other of their history, had to submit to foreign invasion and foreign rule, but such alien contact was either milder in its driving force, or was more in harmony with local tradition and environment, and therefore did not attack the inner bonds of unity which maintained the personality of the people.

A complete change of condition has been brought about by the easy means of communication effected by modern science. It is no longer some resourceful individual, who comes like a comet with a host of mercenary

soldiers forming his tail, suddenly crossing the path of a strange people and eventually getting entangled and assimilated; but an entire predatory nation which is able to clutch in its titanic grip the vitals of other races for whom it has no feeling of kinship.

Men who do not come as representatives of some organization, political, commercial or religious, have their simple human sentiments; they are not like ghosts who haunt human habitations and yet do not dwell in them, who obsess living beings and yet do not live their life. Such real individuals naturally tend to establish personal relationships with their neighbours and gradually attain their common unity. But Europe's connection with Asiatic countries has not yet developed that personal character in its organizations,—it is like the pressure of some callous outgrowth of her nature, which has not the creative touch of life, but only mechanical skillfulness.

The West has come to us like an engineer who lays stone-paved roads across our meadows and orchards, over our trampled verdure, with the primary object of making easy his work of exploitation. However marvellous and convenient this may be, the overwhelming dominance of mere method and skill in our surroundings is demoralising. It so often makes us forget that, compared to life, the machine is too simple, its action too obvious its results measurable in an indubitably definite manner, its concentrated influence directed only towards the surface of our nature.

For the same reason we often witness in western countries the demonstration of immense esteem, approaching hero-worship, for some winner in a game of skill or strength. This has increased to such an inordinate degree, that a professional organizer of such games can claim better remuneration than a cultured teacher, even in an educational institution. The very superficiality inherent in mere proficiency, produces its immediate impression upon the multitude, hiding from them the higher manifestation of truth that has no definite standard of measurement.

The barbarous in us occupies a large place in human nature; it is idolatrous in its instincts, ready to prostrate itself before all representations of power that are external, that compel us to acknowledge them through our greed, or our fear, or our primitive crudity of thought and feeling. In fact the constant sight and contemplation of any success that has colossal magnitude produces the same mentality in us, as in the savage does the fetish, made emphatically apparent by its barbarity of decoration.

However the West, which has thrust itself upon us, is the utilitarian adventurer, imbued with the idolatry of the Nation; it carries an elaborate paraphernalia of self worship, and claims other continents for its victims of sacrifice. The loudest of all the messages that it has brought to ourselves is: *You are none of us.* For this reason, even its best gifts carry for us an insult, and it is for this very reason that, when we cannot help accepting them, we feel so small. The West has hurt us deeply with the shock of its greatness. Its very magnificence faces us with its stony gesture of refusal, allowing us to approach it as the earth does the meteorites, merely to feed with them its own dust.

The moral distance which we impose upon men to whose physical proximity we come for exploitation, is immense. This makes them appear so ridiculously diminutive as to be but dimly recognizable by our conscience. It smooths our path of self-seeking to be able to think that others are absolutely other than ourselves, that their human value is represented in coins that have an utterly different mintage from those which we claim for our own. The West, in its relationship with non-western peoples, has for its constant meditation-text: *They are radically and eternally different from ourselves.* Its cult of separateness, which is the cult of the Nation, bristles with doctrines of disdain. It displays its system of canine teeth in the barbed wire fencing round its inhospitable world, in the name of the inborn right to be supercilious, characteristic of a superior civilization.

Asia, in its dignity of age-long tradition, at first refused to acknowledge Europe's claim of superiority. But gradually it had to own defeat at the hand of the organized power and indomitable self-assertion of the Nation, the latest-born progeny of the West. The spectacle of gigantic success with its unsheathed claws and teeth sank deeper and deeper into Eastern consciousness. The contemptuous sneer which accompanied it rankled in Asia's heart, never allowing it for a moment to remain in forgetfulness of this apparition; till a day has arrived when Asia, overcome by the stupendous coil of muscle, has gradually yielded itself to the licking tongue of this monster: Organization of Power.

There has been related in one of our Bengali epics the legend of a merchant who was a devout worshipper of Shiva the Good, the Pure,—Shiva who represents the principle of renunciation and the power of self-control. This man was perpetually persecuted by a deity, the fierce Snake-goddess, who in order to divert his allegiance to herself inflicted the endless power of her malignance upon her victim. Through a series of failures, deaths and disasters he was at last compelled to acknowledge the superior merit of the divinity of frightfulness. The tragedy does not lie in the external fact of the transfer of homage from one shrine to the other, but in the moral defeat implied in the ascribing of a higher value of truth to the goddess of success,—the personification of unscrupulous egotism,—rather than to the god of moral perfection.

So long as the West herself believed in this latest evolution of her indomitable self-assertion, and was certain that it was going to give her an indefinite extension of the monopoly of all earthly privileges, we in Asia also humbly believed in her. The western people convinced us at the point of their bayonets that they were the chosen people of God, and that the right to inherit the earth was inherent in their race because of a quality which was contrary to that of meekness. We bowed our head to the belief that external success was the ultimate criterion of truth, and I still remember the shock of surprise I felt when a rumour first came to India about Japan's readiness to accept Christianity because it was the religion of a triumphant success, the religion that had unlimited cash in the banks of its devotees and frightful machines of destruction

in their arsenal. The moral humiliation of Asia could go on further, and for a moment I was frightened at the prospect of a whole world some day bringing its homage to the shrine of the Snake-goddess, deserting that of Shiva, the Good.

At that time it was difficult for western people to realize that there was anything lacking in their civilization,—for they were so fatuously prosperous and comfortable, so smugly respectable in their behaviour among their own kinsmen. They were never tired of smiling at themselves and saying that they were good, because their drawing rooms were crowded with irrelevancy, their roads geometrically straight, their minds clever, methods efficient, arrangements convenient; because their women had pet dogs, pet schemes of benevolence and head-dresses for which creatures of rare beauty from the most inaccessible regions of the earth had paid toll with their lives.

We, who belong to other continent than theirs, dwell in the obscurity of their shadow, which swallows up our hemisphere, giving us very little chance to bask in the sunshine of their success. For the attitude of success is exclusive, it is by nature suspicious and arrogant. They do not care to come into the heart of our humanity, for it is not needful for their purpose; and they can be excruciatingly funny when they talk about the peculiarity of the smell of our dwelling places, the inscrutability of our countenances, some mannerisms in our code of behaviour, or any exaggerations in our language or gesture which are different from the exaggerations customary with them and therefore unconscious. Even after this they become sincerely amazed when their energetic acquaintance with us fails to evoke in our mind a grateful feeling of adoration, on when their victims show signs of unhappiness. These they ascribe either to the machination of some interested third party, or to the incomprehensible idiosyncrasies of the people with whom they deal.

It is because we are so imperfectly real to them that they try to boast of their beneficence by making a long list of the railway lines, telegraph posts, coal mines, tea plantations, and the law and order inflicted upon our lands. Their minds are so densely callous to the needs of our humanity that they are ready to punish us when we do not bless them for what they have done to ourselves, in the way of helping us with the commodities which we hardly need and which they vomit forth because they are a great deal more than they can consume themselves.

Let me quote some lines from an article on 'Christian Missions' which came to my notice:

> The last century has contained instance after instance, in the Far East, in Africa, and in the islands of the sea, in which the preaching of the Gospel has seemed to the natives only preliminary to political or economic outrage. Sometimes the two have gone hand in hand. Not soon will educated Chinese forget that the charter under which the Christian missionary operates in his land was a part of that same Treaty of Nanking that legalised the importation of opium. So it is that these peoples wonder in bewilderment why the bodies that proclaim their devotion to

the setting up of the rule of God can be content with the individual type of missions, while sins that give the very Christian concept of God the lie grow luxuriant.

About the political relations of West and East the writer quotes Tyler Dennet who says:

> No nation has escaped the valid charge of bad faith. The guilt of all parties being clearly proven, it has seemed profitless to continue the discussion of guilt with a view to determining the relative degree of wickedness. Each Nation, the United States not excepted, has made its contribution to the welter of evil which now comprises the Far Eastern Question.

Speaking of economic exploitation the same writer observes:

> The ruthless manner in which the ancient handicrafts of India were destroyed to favour the mill-owners of England is a matter of parliamentary record. And the tale of the developing industrial life of India, China and Africa is being written in blood. Western business demands, and secures, all sorts of governmental exemptions and favours to ensure its profits when it goes abroad. And again and again, when there, it follows a policy of inhuman hours and starvation wages that is sowing the wind against the future. It is probable that the West thinks of Sir John Bowring—when it thinks of him at all—as the man who wrote:
>
> In the Cross of Christ I glory
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time.
>
> But the East remembers him as the indefatigable diplomat whose labours contributed so much to the legalisation of the opium traffic in China.

I agree with the author when he says that 'This is the sort of international sin that most grievously besets the future—political injustice, economic exploitation, racial discrimination, material standards of success.' But what to my mind is the source of a greater mischief is the fact that bribery on a prodigious scale is being used to persuade whole peoples in the East to sell their future. As the opium has shackled the mind of the coming generation of China in fetters of stupor, the silver narcotic injected into the people's constitution is creating a chronic national helplessness, inducing a habit which will make the motherland sell her own children. The bribery which has the sanctimonious appearance of benevolence is the most dangerous form of banditry; for through its unctuous exuberance a huge load of ransom noiselessly drags the country to a bottomless insolvency.

We have seen in the late war the moral camouflage creates useful delusion not only in the minds of the opponents but in those of one's own party, and for the same reason a vast ethical department is necessary as an adjunct to the organization of exploitation. For the hand that draws blood is greatly helped if it is guided by the idea that it is translating some Sunday

School lesson into a beautiful practice. In olden times there were tribes of men who throve upon other people's possessions. Not having that sense of decency which wears a protective decoration they used very little material or moral clothing. They are described in history as savage tribes with criminal tendencies. They remained isolated; no respectable peoples copied their manners. Such narrowness of seclusion itself made their mischievous power shortlived and restricted it to a small area.

In modern times they have changed their names and methods, and even while a great portion of the world is being, ripped open by the iron claws of their organization they have no hesitation in believing in the sure foundation of their civilization and the perfection of its superstructure. It produces such a moral confusion that even we, who are their victims, are willing to copy them.

In fact we are beginning to be ashamed of our trust in what we call *dharma*, the sovereignty of the inner world of ideals. We think that it is a sign of the possession of some brand-new type of cleverness, shiningly up-to-date; to be able to join in the chorus of cynical laughter at a faith in the reality of moral truth.,

So we watched for long the outer horizon and there saw no portent of storm-clouds overtaking the fair weather in the West; in fact, all our meteorological misgivings pointed their arrow-heads to the thunder-bearing forces from the West carrying menace in other directions. We had been witnessing for too long the triumph in human history of the law of natural selection prevalent in the biological world, the elbowing out of the less offensive by the aggressive pressure of a superior pushfulness. All our calculations come to be based upon the working of that law till, at last, the man in us made his final obeisance to the brute in us and uttered in awe: *Hail, unholy Might!*

While such a hymn of praise was being raised in all the countries of the world, both by the victors and the vanquished, while the races favoured by fortune dreamt of nothing else but the sharpening of their military fangs and the lengthening of their commercial suckers; while the defeated peoples were cherishing the hope, and secretly preparing, to be able one day to contribute their own share of devilry to the political nightmare of the modern cult of nationalism; the most devastating war that ever happened tore into tatters the enormous self-satisfaction of Europe. She has lately been startled into realizing that its origin was not from outside.

Up to this moment she had been at the zenith of her power and brilliancy; to outward seeming she had conquered endless time for her boundless prosperity, while she had been moulding with a pitiless success the destiny of millions of alien people fashion her own footstool and keep it permanently secure. The barometer which recorded the external condition of the atmosphere foreboded a perpetual monotony of fair weather. There had been, no doubt, angry flashes of lightning from the friction created by colliding greeds, but it was firmly believed that the urging of an intelligent self-interest was itself sufficient to check any of these violent gestures from ending in a catastrophe.

Then came the day when everything that had given her supremacy in the world seemed to turn against her and the Science which she had tamed for a hunting expedition tore ugly rents in her own limbs, which still show no sign of healing. So her proud mind has had to come to the conclusion that her present suffering is not due to any lack of intellectual attainment or material advantage, but to some cancerous growth within her own moral nature.

This has, at length, given us in Asia the opportunity of judging Europe with our mind freed from the hypnotism of success,—an opportunity necessary for our own salvation. This judgment must not be in a spirit of retaliation, which chuckles at the chance of hurling back at the West some part of the evil-smelling mud which she was never tired of flinging at the unprotected Orient. Nevertheless we must have the courage to judge. For the standard of moral judgment is the true helm of our life. Lately it has been laughed at by the modern young person for being stationary, and our hold upon it has been slackened. We must regain our confidence in it, knowing that this helm is more necessary for us to-day than ever before, because we are overtaken by a current that is sudden and swift, by winds that are changing, and because we must move among breakers.

Fight there must be in this world. We cannot make truce with impunity. Our evolution towards the perfect has been and has to be through a series of fights. Our moral judgment is the best weapon we have in the warfare for the preservation of humanity. With it we have to resist, and even to hurt, for the cause of justice.

Have we not noticed in the modern East how the people, who have a highly developed instinct for turning out things of perfect beauty for their daily life show utter crudity in their selection of western articles for show or for use? They completely forget the dignity of the true born aristocracy which they possess in the world of craftsmanship when they try to acquire or imitate the furniture and other western appliances that bear the brand of the outcast. They carelessly allow the aggression of weeds into their garden where flowers have been nourished by the love and the sensitive understanding of generations of their forefathers. It has been made possible because they have blindly surrendered their judgment of excellence overwhelmed by the spectacle of a robust success. In their infatuation they rob Apollo of his homage in order to offer it to the image of Hercules.

My heart was filled with shame and pain when I passed by the ruined mounds of the Summer Palace of Peking, brought to the dust by those who were furiously loud in their condemnation of the destruction of some ancient cathedrals of Europe by their enemies. Yet they can be forgiven, for they knew not what they had been doing. They merely personated an unintelligent storm of fury which had a scientific thoroughness of brutality, and they wantonly destroyed buildings, pictures and objects of art the like of which was never seen before nor will be in the future.

But it fills my heart with despair when I realize that the modern Chinese are themselves helping in the devastation of the genius of China, daily growing

used to things that are merely convenient and forgetting the miracle of creative touch which their fingers have acquired. It shows a laziness of apathy which is uncivilized. True civilization knows the value of things that belong to the higher nature of man and is ever ready to take trouble to produce them, use them, and maintain them in their excellence. To succumb to the temptation of cheap production and hasty utility is the sign of the shallow mind that seeks its release from the strenuous claim of high aspiration in the vulgar comfort of standardised respectability. The educated China of to-day seems to have surrendered its judgment of taste and through this defeat is threatened with a desert of white monotony swallowing up the colours and features of its civilization.

The surrender of moral judgment is also a defeat through which the invasion of the West is laying its stony road across the soul of the East, leading most of its traffic of ideas to the gambling den of commerce and politics, to the furious competition of suicide in the arena of military lunacy. Shady paths that ran into various avenues of life carrying the invitation of hearts and the call of co-operation, are one by one being closed. This also is helping the monotonous extension of that aspect of the West which is not fruit-bearing.

But we must not allow this to go on. We must find our voice to be able to say to the West: 'You may force your things into our homes, you may obstruct our prospects of life,—but *we judge you*. You may ignore our judgment. Materially it will not injure you, nor check you in your climbing up the dizzy precipice of profit and power, but it will save us from moral degradation. We refuse to humiliate ourselves by saying that you are worthy of obedience because you are strong, worthy of respect because you are rich.'

What I have discussed above only shows that in its relation to the eastern peoples the aspect of western character which has come uppermost is not only insulting to us but to the West itself. Nothing could have been more unfortunate in the history of man than this. For all meetings of men should reveal some great truth which is worthy of a permanent memorial, such, as for instance, had been the case of India's meeting with China in the ancient time.

At the moment when the West came to our door, the whole of Asia was asleep, the darkness of night had fallen over her life. Her lights were dim, her voice mute. She had stored up in her vaults her treasure, no longer growing. She had her wisdom shut in her books. She was not producing living thoughts of fresh forms of beauty. She was not moving forward but endlessly revolving round her past. She was not ready to receive the West in all her majesty of soul.

The best in us attracts the best in others: our weakness attracts violence to our neighbourhood, as thinness in the air attracts a storm. To remain in the fulness of our manifestation is our duty, not only for ourselves but for others. We have not seen the great in the West because we have failed to bring out the great that we have in us and we delude ourselves into thinking that we can hide this deficiency behind borrowed feathers.

Yet, through all our shame and our suffering, we have to acknowledge that the West is great. With her science she has offered a grand illumination

to the path of reason. Some people in the East are in the habit of reviling science, calling it materialistic. They may as well say that incendiarism is in the fire. Science is truth. It is immaterial. It gives us freedom in the realm of matter. It brings our mind into touch with the eternal at the uttermost brink of the finite. What if science can help some temperaments solely to cultivate materialism,—cannot religion do the same? We have witnessed in the East the grossest form of materialism and the cruellest form of inhumanity stalking abroad in our society wearing the uniform of spiritual culture. We constantly see the epicureanism of religious emotion, indulged in by self-centred individuals, admired by simple-minded people as piety in full blossom.

On the other hand, the usual form of spiritual expression we find in the lives of the best individuals in western countries is their love of humanity, their spirit working through their character; their keen intellect and their indomitable will leaguing together for human welfare. In their individuals it reveals itself in loyalty to the cause of truth for which so many of them are ready to suffer martyrdom, often standing heroically alone against some fury of their national insanity. When their wide human interest, which is intellectual, takes a moral direction, it grows into a fulness of intelligent service of man that can ignore all geographical limits and racial habits of tradition. The goodness which is undaunted in its chivalrous adventure, and love of truth, variedly active and widespread in its ministration, we do not see in the East.

But, because in their individual lives the western peoples have raised the tower of their moral standard so high, the ravage of their national unrighteousness at the base is fraught with dangerous consequence. Bespattering the whole world with their diplomatic lies, continually adding to the number of victims for their man-eating prosperity, scientifically crushing the human rights of large continents of races, spreading a contagion of ugly carbuncles all over the earth with the impurity of their utilitarian touch, keeping their snarling nastiness bared at the entrance of their miserly national mansion,—they have, in all these, an ever increasing gravitational pull against the top of their greatness. The fall will be terrific.

But what is most unfortunate for us in Asia is the fact that the advent of the West into our continent has been accompanied not only by science, which is truth and therefore welcome, but by an impious use of truth for the violent purpose of self-seeking which converts it into a disruptive force. It is producing in the countries with which it is in contact a diseased mentality that refuses moral ideals, considering them to be unworthy of those who aspire to be rulers of men, and who must furiously cultivate their fitness to survive. That such a philosophy of survival, fit for the world of tigers, cannot but bring a fatal catastrophe in the human world, they do not see. They become violently angry at those who protest against it, fearing that such a protest might weaken in them the animal that should be allowed to survive for eternity.

Doctors know that infusion of animal blood into human veins does not give vigour to man but produces death, and the intrusion of the animal into humanity will never be for its survival. But faith in man is weakening even in

the East, for we have seen that science has enabled the inhuman to prosper, the lie to thrive, the machine to rule in the place of *Dharma*. Therefore in order to save us from the anarchy of weak faith we must stand up to-day and judge the West.

But we must guard against antipathy that produces blindness. We must not disable ourselves from receiving truth. For the West has appeared before the present-day world not only with her dynamite of passion and cargo of things but with her gift of truth. Until we fully accept it in a right spirit we shall never even discover what is true in our own civilization and make it generously fruitful by offering it to the world. The culture, the humanity of the West do not belong to the Nation but to the People.

While nations fight for their exclusive possessions, the peoples share with one another their true wealth. And the highest spirit of the peoples of the West, their loyal love of truth and active love of man, we must try to make our own in order to impart to our life a movement and to our ideals a vitality that shall give them the impulse to produce new flower and fruit.

1925

THE PHILOSOPHY OF OUR PEOPLE

My timidity makes it difficult for me properly to enjoy the honour you have done me to-day by offering a chair which I cannot legitimately claim as my own. It has often made me wonder, since I had my invitation, whether it would suit my dignity to occupy such a precarious position on an ephemeral eminence, deservedly incurring anger from some and ridicule from others. While debating in my mind as to whether I should avoid this risk with the help of the doctor's certificate, it occurred to me that possibly my ignorance of philosophy was the best recommendation for this place in a philosophers' meeting,—that you wanted for your president a man who was blankly neutral and who consciously owed no allegiance to any particular system of metaphysics, being impartially innocent of them all. The most convenient thing about me is that the degree of my qualification is beyond the range of a comparative discussion,—it is so utterly negative. In my present situation, I may be compared to a candlestick that has none of the luminous qualities of a candle and, therefore, suitable for its allotted function, which is to remain darkly inactive.

But, unfortunately, you do not allow me to remain silent even in the circumstance when silence was declared to be prudent by one of our ancient sages. The only thing which encourages me to overcome my diffidence, and give expression in a speech to my unsophisticated mind, is the fact that in India all the *vidyās*,—poesy as well as philosophy,—live in a joint family. They never have the jealous sense of individualism maintaining the punitive regulations against trespass that seem to be so rife in the West.

Plato as a philosopher decreed the banishment of poets from his ideal Republic. But, in India, philosophy ever sought alliance with poetry, because its mission was to occupy the people's life and not merely the learned seclusion of scholarship. Therefore, our tradition, though unsupported by historical evidence, has no hesitation in ascribing numerous verses to the great Sankarāchārya, a metaphysician whom Plato would find it extremely difficult to exclude from his Utopia with the help of any inhospitable Immigration Law. Many of these poems may not have high poetical value, but no lover of literature ever blames the sage for infringement of propriety in condescending to manufacture verse.

According to our people, poetry naturally falls within the scope of a philosopher, when his reason is illumined into a vision. We have our great epic Mahābhārata, which is unique in world literature, not only because of the marvellous variety of human characters, great and small, discussed in its pages in all variety of psychological circumstances, but because of the ease with which it carries in its comprehensive capaciousness all kinds of speculation about ethics, politics and philosophy of life. Such an improvident generosity on the part of poesy, the risk of exceeding its own proper limits of accommodation, has only been possible in India where a spirit of communism prevails

the different individual groups of literature. In fact the Mahābhārata is a universe in itself in which various sphere of mind's creation find ample space for their complex dance rhythm. It does not represent the idiosyncrasy of a particular poet but the normal mentality of the people who are willingly be led along the many branched path of a whole world thoughts, held together in a gigantic orb of narrative surrounded by innumerable satellites of episodes.

The numerous saints that India successively produced during the Mahomedan rule have all been singers whose are aflame with the fire of imagination. Their religious emotion had its spring in the depth of a philosophy that deals with fundamental questions,—with the ultimate meaning of existence. That may not be remarkable in itself; but when we find that these songs are not specially meant for some exclusive pundits' gathering, but that they are sung in villages and listened to by men and women who are illiterate, we realize how philosophy has permeated the life of the people in India, how it has sunk deep into the sub-conscious mind of the country.

In my childhood I once heard from a singer, who was a devout Hindu, the following song of Kabir:

When I hear of a fish in the water dying of thirst, it makes me laugh.
If it be true that the infinite Brahma pervades all space,
What is the meaning of the places of pilgrimage like Mathura or Kashi?

This laughter of Kabir did not hurt in the least the pious susceptibilities of the Hindu singer; on the contrary, he was ready to join the poet with his own. For he, by the philosophical freedom of his mind, was fully aware that Mathura or Kashi, as sites of God, did not have an absolute value of truth, though they had their symbolical importance. Therefore, while he himself was eager to make a pilgrimage to those places, he had no doubt in his mind that, if it were in his power directly to realize *Brahma* as an all-pervading reality, there would have been no necessity for him to visit any particular place for the quickening of his spiritual consciousness. He acknowledged the psychological necessity for such shrines, where generations of devotees have chosen to gather for the purpose of worship, in the same way as he felt the special efficacy for our mind of the time-honoured sacred texts made living by the voice of ages.

It is a village poet of East Bengal who in his songs preaches the philosophical doctrine that the universe has its reality in its relation to the Person. He sings:

The sky and the earth are born of mine own eyes.
The hardness and softness, the cold and the heat
are the products of my own body;
The sweet smell and the bad are of my own nose.

This poet sings of the Eternal Person within him, coming out and appearing before his eyes just as the Vedic Rishi speaks of the Person, who is in him, dwelling also in the heart of the Sun.

I have seen the vision,
The vision of mine own revealing itself,
Coming out from within me.

The significant fact about these philosophical poems is that they are of crude construction, written in a popular dialect and disclaimed by the academic literature; they are sung to the people, as composed by one of them who is dead, but whose songs have not followed him. Yet these singers almost arrogantly disown their direct obligation to philosophy, and there is a story of one of our rural poets who, after some learned text of the Vaishnava philosophy of emotion was explained to him, composed a song containing the following lines:

Alas, a jeweller has come into the flower garden!—
He wants to appraise the truth of a lotus by rubbing it against his touchstone.

The members of the *Baül* sect belong to that mass of the people in Bengal who are not educated in the prevalent senses of the word. I remember how troubled they were, when I asked some of them to write down for me a collection of their songs. When they *did* venture to attempt it, I found it almost impossible to decipher their writing—the spelling and lettering were so outrageously unconventional. Yet their spiritual practices are founded upon a mystic philosophy of the human body, abstrusely technical. These people roam about singing their songs, one of which I heard years ago from my roadside window, the first two lines remaining inscribed in my memory:

Nobody can tell whence the bird unknown
Comes into the cage and goes out.
I would feign put round its feet the fetter of my mind,
Could I but capture it.

This village poet evidently agrees with our sage of the Upanishad who says that our mind comes back baffled in its attempt to reach the Unknown Being; and yet this poet like the ancient sage does not give up his adventure of the infinite, thus implying that there is a way to its realization. It reminds me of Shelley's poem in which he sings of the mystical spirit of Beauty:

The awful shadow of some unseen Bower
Floats, though unseen, among us visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower.
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance.

That this Unknown is the profoundest reality, though difficult of comprehension, is equally admitted by the English poet as by the nameless village singer of Bengal in whose music vibrate the wing beats of the unknown bird,—only

Shelley's utterance is for the cultured few while the Baül song is for the tillers of the soil, for the simple folk of our village households, who are never bored by its mystic transcendentalism.

All this is owing to the wonderful system of mass education which has prevailed for ages in India, and which to-day is in danger of becoming extinct. We have our academic seats of learning where students flock round their famous teachers from distant parts of the country. These places are like lakes, full of deep but still water, which have to be approached through difficult paths. But the constant evaporation from them, forming clouds, is carried by the wind from field to field, across hills and dales and through all the different divisions of the land. Operas based upon legendary poems, recitations and story-telling by trained men, the lyrical wealth of the popular literature distributed far and wide by the agency of mendicant singers,—these are the clouds that help to irrigate the minds of the people with the ideas which in their original form belonged to difficult doctrines of metaphysics. Profound speculations contained in the systems of Sānkhya, Vedānta and Yôga are transformed into the living harvest of the people's literature, brought to the door of those who can never have the leisure and training to pursue these thoughts to their fountain-head.

In order to enable a civilized community to carry on its complex functions, there must be a large number of men who have to take charge of its material needs, however onerous such task may be. Their vocation gives them no opportunity to cultivate their mind. Yet they form the vast multitude, compelled to turn themselves into unthinking machines of production so that a few may have the time to think great thoughts, create immortal forms of art and to lead humanity to spiritual altitudes.

India has never neglected these social martyrs, but has tried to bring light into the grimy obscurity of their life-long toil, and has always acknowledged its duty to supply them with mental and spiritual food in assimilable form through the medium of a variety of ceremonies. This process is not carried on by any specially organized association of public service, but by a spontaneous social adjustment which acts like circulation of blood in our bodily system. Because of this, the work continues even when the original purpose ceases to exist.

Once when I was on a visit to a small Bengal village mostly inhabited by Mahomedan cultivators, the villagers entertained me with an opera performance the literature of which belonged to an obsolete religious sect that had wide influence centuries ago. Though the religion itself is dead, its voice still continues preaching its philosophy to a people who in spite of their different culture are not tired of listening. It discussed according to its own doctrine the different elements, material and transcendental, that constitute human personality, comprehending the body, the self and the soul. Then came a dialogue during the course of which was related the incident of a person who wanted to make a journey to *Brindāban*, the Garden of Bliss, but was prevented by a watchman who startled him with an accusation of theft. The thieving was

proved when it was shown that inside his clothes he was secretly trying to smuggle into the garden the *self*, passing it on as his own and not admitting that it is for his master. The culprit was caught with the incriminating bundle in his possession which barred-for him his passage to the supreme goal. Under a tattered canopy held on bamboo poles and lighted by a few smoking kerosene lamps, the village crowd, occasionally interrupted by howls of jackals in the neighbouring paddy fields, attended with untired interest, till the small hours of the morning, the performance of a drama, that discussed the ultimate meaning of all things in a seemingly incongruous setting of dance, music and humorous dialogue.

These illustrations will show how naturally, in India, poetry and philosophy have walked hand in hand, only because the latter has claimed its right to guide men to the practical path of their life's fulfilment. What is that fulfilment? It is our freedom in truth, which has for its prayer:

Lead us from the unreal to Reality.

For *satyam is ānandam*, the real is joy.

From my vocation as an artist in verse, I have come to my own idea about the joy of the real. For to give us the taste of reality through freedom of mind is the nature of all arts. When in relation to them we talk of aesthetics we must know that it is not about beauty in its ordinary meaning, but in that deeper meaning which a poet has expressed in his utterance: 'Truth is beauty, beauty truth.' An artist may paint a picture of a decrepit person not pleasant to look at, and yet we call it perfect when we become intensely conscious of its reality. The mind of the jealous woman in Browning's poem, watching the preparation of poison and in imagination gloating over its possible effect upon her rival, is not beautiful; but when it stands vividly real before our consciousness, through the unity of consistency in its idea and form, we have our enjoyment. The character of Karna, the great warrior of the Mahābhārata, gives us a deeper delight through its occasional outbursts of meanness, than it would if it were a model picture of unadulterated magnanimity. The very contradictions which hurt the completeness of a moral ideal have helped us to feel the reality of the character, and this gives us joy, not because it is pleasant in itself, but because it is definite in its creation.

It is not wholly true that art has its value for us because in it we realize all that we fail to attain in our life; but the fact is that the function of art is to bring us, with its creations, into immediate touch with reality. These need not resemble actual facts of our experience, and yet they do delight our heart because they are made true to us. In the world of art, our consciousness being freed from the tangle of self-interest, we gain an unobstructed vision of unity, the incarnation of the real, which is a joy for ever.

As in the world of art, so in God's world, our soul waits for its freedom from the ego to reach that disinterested joy which is the source and goal of creation. It cries for its *mukti* into the unity of truth from the mirage of appearances endlessly pursued by the thirsty self. This idea of *mukti*, based upon

metaphysics, has affected our life in India, touched the springs of our emotions, and supplications for it soar heavenward on the wings of poesy. We constantly hear men of scanty learning, and simple faith singing in their prayer to *Tara*, the Goddess Redeemer:

> *For what sin should I be compelled to remain in this dungeon of the world oj appearance?*

They are afraid of being alienated from the world of truth afraid of their perpetual drifting amidst the froth and foam of things, of being tossed about by the tidal waves of pleasure and pain and never reaching the ultimate meaning of life. Of these men, one may be a carter driving his cart to market, another a fisherman plying his net. They may not be prompt with an intelligent answer, if questioned about the deeper import of the song they sing, but they have no doubt in their mind, that the abiding cause of all misery is not so much in the lack of life furniture as in the obscurity of life's significance. It is common topic with such to decry an undue emphasis upon *me* and *mine*, which falsifies the perspective of truth. For have they not often seen men, who are not above their own level in social position or intellectual acquirement, going on to seek Truth, leaving everything that they have behind them.

They know that the object of these adventurers is not betterment in worldly wealth and power,—it is *mukti*, freedom. They possibly know some poor fellow villager of their own craft, who remains in the world carrying on his daily vocation, and yet has the reputation of being emancipated in the heart of the Eternal. I myself have come across a fisherman singing with an inward absorption of mind, while fishing all day in the Ganges, who was pointed out to me by my boatmen, with awe, as a man of liberated spirit. He is out of reach of the conventional prices which are set upon men by society, and which classify them like toys arranged in the shop-windows according to the market standard of value.

When the figure of this fisherman comes to my mind, I cannot but think that their number is not small who with their lives sing the epic of the unfettered soul, but will never be known in history. These unsophisticated Indian peasants know that in Emperor is a decorated slave remaining chained to his Empire, that a millionaire is kept pilloried by his fate in the golden cage of his wealth, while this fisherman is free in the realm of light. When, groping in the dark, we stumble against objects, we cling to them believing them to be our only hope. When light comes we slacken our hold, finding them to be mere parts of the all to which we are related. The simple man of the village knows what freedom is—freedom from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things which imparts a fierce intensity to our sense of possession. He knows that this freedom is not in the mere negation of bondage, in the bareness of belongings, but in some positive realization which gives pure joy to our being, and he sings:

> *To him who sinks into the deep, nothing remains unattained.*

Let my two minds meet and combine
And lead me to the City Wonderful.

When the one mind of ours which wanders in search of things in the outer region of the varied, and the other which seeks the inward vision of unity, are no longer in conflict, they help us to realize the *ajab*, the *anirvachanīya*, the ineffable. The poet saint Kabir has also the same message when he sings:

By saying that Supreme Reality only, dwells in the inner realm of spirit we shame the outer world of matter, and also when we say that he is only in the outside we do not speak the truth.

According to these singers, truth is in unity and therefore freedom is in its realization. The texts of our daily worship and meditation are for training our mind to overcome the barrier of separateness from the rest of existence and to realize *advaitam*, the Supreme Unity which is *anantam*, infinitude. It is philosophical wisdom having its universal radiation in the popular mind in India but inspires our prayer, our daily spiritual practices. It has its constant urging for us to go beyond the world of appearances in which facts as facts are alien to us, like the mere sounds of a foreign music; it speaks to us of an emancipation in the inner truth of all things in which the endless *many* reveals the *One*, as the multitude of notes, when we understand them, reveal to us the inner unity which is music.

But because this freedom is in truth itself and not in an appearance of it, no hurried path of success, forcibly cut out by the greed of result, can be a true path. And an obscure village poet, unknown to the world of recognized respectability, untramelled by the standardised learning of the Education Department, sings:

O cruel man of urgent need, must you scorch with fire the mind which, still is a bud? You will burst it into bits, destroy its perfume in your impatience. Do you not see that my lord, the Supreme Teacher, takes ages to perfect the flower and never is in a fury of haste? But because of your terrible greed you only rely on force, and what hope is there for you, O man of urgent need? 'Prithee!' says Madan the poet. 'Hurt not the mind of my Teacher. Know that only he who follows the simple current and loses himself, can hear the voice, O man of urgent need.'

This poet knows that there is no external means of taking freedom by the throat. It is the inward process of losing ourselves that leads us to it. Bondage in all its forms has its stronghold in the inner self and not in the outside world; it is in the dimming of our consciousness, in the narrowing of our perspective, in the wrong valuation of things.

The proof of this we find in the modern civilization whose motive force has become a ceaseless urgency of need. Its freedom is only the apparent freedom of inertia which does not know how and where to stop. There are some primitive people who have put an artificial value on human scalps and they develop an arithmetical fury which does not allow them to stop in the

gathering of their trophies. They are driven by some cruel fate into an endless exaggeration which makes them ceaselessly run on an interminable path of addition. Such a freedom in their wild course of collection is the worst form of bondage. The cruel urgency of need is all the more aggravated in their case because of the lack of truth in its object. Similarly it should be realized that a mere addition to the rate of speed, to the paraphernalia of fat living and display of furniture, to the frightfulness of destructive armaments, only leads to an insensate orgy of a caricature of bigness. The links of bondage go on multiplying themselves, threatening to shackle the whole world with the chain forged by such unmeaning and unending urgency of need.

The idea of *mukti* in Christian theology is liberation from a punishment which we carry with our birth. In India it is from the dark enclosure of ignorance which causes the illusion of a self that seems final. But the enlightenment which frees us from this ignorance must not merely be negative. Freedom is not in an emptiness of its contents, it is in the harmony of communication through which we find no obstruction in realizing our own being in the surrounding world. It is of this harmony, and not of a bare and barren isolation, that the Upanishad speaks, when it says that the truth no longer remains hidden in him who finds himself in the All.

Freedom in the material world has also the same meaning expressed in its own language. When nature's phenomena appeared to us as manifestations of an obscure and irrational caprice, we lived in an alien world never dreaming of our *swaraj* within its territory. With the discovery of the harmony of its working with that of our reason, we realize our unity with it and, therefore, freedom. It is *avidyā*, ignorance, which causes our disunion with our surroundings. It is *vidyā*, the knowledge of the *Brahma* manifested in the material universe that makes us realize *advaitam*, the spirit of unity in the world of matter.

Those who have been brought up in a misunderstanding of this world's process, not knowing that it is his by his right of intelligence, are trained as cowards by a hopeless faith in the ordinance of a destiny darkly dealing its blows, offering no room for appeal. They submit without struggle when human rights are denied them, being accustomed to imagine themselves born as outlaws in a world constantly thrusting upon them incomprehensible surprises of accidents.

Also in the social or political field, the lack of freedom is based upon the spirit of alienation, on the imperfect realization of *advaitam*. There our bondage is in the tortured link of union. One may imagine that an individual who succeeds in dissociating himself from his fellows attains real freedom, inasmuch as all ties of relationship imply obligation to others. But we know that, though it may sound paradoxical, it is true that in the human world only a perfect arrangement of interdependence gives rise to freedom. The most individualistic of human beings, who own no responsibility, are the savages who fail to attain their fulness of manifestation. They live immersed in obscurity, like an ill-lighted fire that cannot liberate itself, from its envelope

of smoke. Only those may attain their freedom from the segregation of an eclipsed life, who have the power to cultivate mutual understanding the co-operation. The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship.

The strongest barrier against freedom in all departments of life is the selfishness of individuals or groups. Civilization, whose object is to afford humanity its greatest possible opportunity of complete manifestation, perishes when some selfish passion, in place of a moral ideal, is allowed to exploit its resources unopposed, for its own purposes. For the greed of acquisition and the living principle of creation are antagonist to each other. Life has brought with it the first triumph of freedom in the world of the inert, because it is an inner expression and not merely an external fact, because it must always exceed the limits of its substance, never allowing its materials to clog its spirit, and yet ever keeping to the limits of its truth. Its accumulation must not suppress its harmony of growth, the harmony that unites the *in* and the *out*, the end and the means, the *what is* and the *what is to come.*

Life does not store up but assimilates; its spirit and its substance, its work and itself, are intimately united. When the non-living elements of our surroundings are stupendously disproportionate, when they are mechanical systems and hoarded possessions, then the mutual discord between our life and our world ends in the defeat of the former. The gulf thus created by the receding stream of soul we try to replenish with a continuous shower of wealth which may have the power to fill but not the power to unite. Therefore the gap is dangerously concealed under the glittering quick-sands of things which by their own accumulating weight cause a sudden subsidence, while we are in the depth of our sleep.

But the real tragedy does not lie in the destruction of our material security, it is in the obscuration of man himself in the human world. In his creative activities man makes his surroundings instinct with his own life and love. But in his utilitarian ambition he deforms and defiles it with the callous handling of his voracity. This world of man's manufacture with its discordant shrieks and mechanical movements, reacts upon his own nature, incessantly suggesting to him a scheme of universe which is an abstract system. In such a world there can be no question of *mukti,* because it is solidly solitary fact, because the cage is all that we have, and no sky beyond it. In all appearance the world to us *is* a closed world, like a seed within its hard cover. But in the core of the seed there is the cry of *Life* for *mukti* even when the proof of its possibility is darkly silent. When some huge temptation tramples into stillness this living aspiration after *mukti,* then does civilization die like a seed that has lost its urging for germination.

It is not altogether true that the ideal of *mukti* in India is based upon a philosophy of passivity. The Ishopanishad has strongly asserted that man must wish to live a hundred years and go on doing his work; for, according to it, the complete truth is in the harmony of the infinite and the finite, the passive ideal of perfection and the active process of its revealment; according to it, he who

pursues the knowledge of the infinite as an absolute truth sinks even into a deeper darkness than he who pursues the cult of the finite as complete in itself. He who thinks that a mere aggregation of changing notes has the ultimate value of unchanging music, is no doubt foolish; but his foolishness is exceeded by that of one who thinks that true music is devoid of all notes. But where is the reconciliation? Through what means does the music which is transcendental turn the facts of the detached notes into a vehicle of its expression? It is through the rhythm, the very limit of its composition. We reach the infinite through crossing the path that is definite. It is this that is meant in the following verse of the Isha:

> *He who knows the truth of the infinite and that of the finite both united together, crosses death by the help of* avidyā, *and by the help of* vidyā *reaches immortality.*

The regulated life is the rhythm of the finite through whose very restrictions we pass to the immortal life. This *amritam*, the immortal life, is not a mere prolongation of physical existence, it is in the realization of the perfect, it is in the well-proportioned beautiful definition of life which every moment surpasses its own limits and expresses the Eternal. In the very first verse of the Isha, the injunction is given to us *mā gridhah. Thou shalt not covet.* But why should we not? Because greed, having no limit, smothers the rhythm of life—the rhythm which is expressive of the limitless.

The modern civilization is largely composed of *atmahanojanāh* who are spiritual suicides. It has lost its will for limiting its desires, for restraining its perpetual self-exaggeration. Because it has lost its philosophy of life, it loses its art of living. Like poetasters it mistakes skill for power and realism for reality. In the Middle Ages when Europe believed in the kingdom of heaven, she struggled to modulate her life's forces to effect their harmonious relation to this ideal, which always sent its call to her activities in the midst of the boisterous conflict of her passions. There was in this endeavour an ever present scheme of creation, something which was positive, which had the authority to say: *Thou shalt not covet, thou must find thy true limits.* To-day there is only a furious rage for raising numberless brick-kilns in place of buildings. The great scheme of the master-builder has been smothered under the heaps of brick-dust. It proves the severance of *avidyā* from her union with *vidyā* giving rise to an unrhythmic power, ignoring all creative plan, igniting a flame that has heat but no light.

Creation is in rhythm,—the rhythm which is the border on which *vidyāncha avidyāncha*, the infinite and the finite, meet. We do not know how, from the indeterminate, the lotus flower finds its being. So long as it is merged in the vague it is nothing to us, and yet it must have been everywhere. Somehow from the vast it has been captured in a perfect rhythmical limit forming an eddy in our consciousness, arousing within us a recognition of delight at the touch of the infinite which finitude gives. It is the limiting process which is the work of a creator, who finds his freedom through his restraints, the truth of

the boundless through the reality of the bounds. The insatiable idolatory of material, that runs along an ever-lengthening line of extravagance, is inexpressive; it belongs to those regions which are *andhênatamasāvritah*, enveloped in darkness, which ever carry the load of their inarticulate bulk. The true prayer of man is for the Real not for the big, for the Light which is not in incendiarism but in illumination, for Immortality which is not in duration of time, but in the eternity of the perfect.

Only because we have closed our path to the inner world of *mukti*, has the outer world become terrible in its exactions. It is a slavery to continue to live in a sphere where things are, yet where their meaning is obstructed. It has become possible for men to say that existence is evil, only because in our blindness we have missed something in which our existence has its truth. If a bird tries to soar in the sky with only one of its wings, it is offended with the wind for buffeting it down to the dust. All broken truths are evil. They hurt because they suggest something, which they do not offer. Death does not hurt us, but disease does, because disease constantly reminds us of health and yet withholds it from us. And life in a half world is evil, because it feigns finality when it is obviously incomplete, giving us the cup, but not the draught of life. All tragedies consist in truth remaining fragmentary, its cycle not being completed.

Let me close with a *Baül* song, over a century old, in which the poet sings of the eternal bond of union between the infinite and the finite soul, from which there can be no *mukti*, because it is an interrelation which makes truth complete, because love is ultimate, because absolute independence is the blankness of utter sterility. The idea in it is the same as we have in the Upanishad that truth is neither in pure *vidyā* nor in *avidyā*, but in their union:

> *It goes on blossoming for ages; the soul-lotus in which I am bound, as well as thou, without escape. There is no end to the opening of its petals, and the honey in it has such sweetness that thou like an enchanted bee canst never desert it, and therefore thou art bound, and I am, and mukti is nowhere.*

1926

THE RULE OF THE GIANT

WRONGS CAN BE seen and felt separately, but most often their one common source remains hidden, and so ignored. I have tried to describe in this paper what I consider to be the parent ill of the present age.

The fact comprising the non-human comes under neither good nor bad. All that can be said about it is that it persists in space and time. The reality of its existence is judged by a criterion that can count, measure and weigh. The fact of human personality is not judged by any value that lies in quantity of force or substance, or duration of time. It has its significance in an ideal of perfection according to which it is either good or bad. Since the secret of nature's forces has been revealed to man, wealth and power have grown so stupendously big that the barbarous in him has been stricken with awe at their enormity. Peoples are set dreaming of the big wealth of millions and the big power of imperialism. The standard of quantity is every day getting the better of the standard of perfection and truth. The idolatry of bigness has occupied the altar of greatness. As the human world is the world of personality, such desecration, if tolerated, will reduce men into mere things, and things into dust.

It is the hugely disproportionate growth, in modern civilization, of the not-life, of which the bulk of overshadowing life and whose weight is crushing it. We are every day growing more and more tolerant of the disharmony produced between Man and his organization, between his means and end, thereby offering to unbalanced bigness more and more temptation to insult the ideal of fulness that gives us equilibrium in things and equanimity in mind.

Life has its own special cadence with which the environment that it creates for itself should be in accord. Otherwise the whole thing becomes like a melody whose accompaniment, in a sudden frenzy, has developed a different pitch and time of its own. Whereupon the man who seeks his fulfilment finds noise in place of music and self-assertion bullying self-expression into silence.

In the present age when human society has the tendency to swell up into overgrown organizations, the weight of their bulk cannot but obstruct the spirit's modulations. Possibly they are scientifically adapted to one or more special purposes. But the ultimate purpose which is the perfect expression of personality is forgotten, making it possible for man to pay all his attention to the golden eggs, and to do away with the inconvenient bird that claims attention to its life. The knife that kills it is exquisitely efficient, the hand that wields the knife is accurately dexterous, and the crowd is exultant at this marvel of achievement, at this triumph of the efficiency in its apparatus and dexterity in its agents. It requires courage to disturb this jubilant self-gratulation with the question: 'What about the bird? Where is the complete man, the Person?' Such a question seems so out of date; the concern about the bird is so old fashioned and sentimental; what is so gloriously modern is the big knife and the complex technicality.

There is a radical difference between man's ambition and his aspiration. Aspiration seeks growth as a whole; it is the process of life itself, the life which has its balance of proportion, its poetry of limits. Ambition goes on adding to the parts; it is an arithmetical process. In its greed for fuel it has no compunction in smothering the fire. Our body needs clothing; yet because it is not a wardrobe, but a living organism, the clothes must have sufficient lightness and flexibility to be able to move easily with life's movements. But if the clothing be a heavy suit of mail, then it may serve a particular purpose for a special contingency, but not the full purpose of life. It looks formidable; it denotes power in a man who wears it; it evokes admiration in the juvenile heart; but all the while it weighs upon life like death itself. In the same manner a society, that produces a hugeness of organization in its politics, commerce, religion, education and amusement, which fetters its living limbs and smothers the movements of its spiritual expression, continually builds round itself its own tomb, albeit for the time being this appears like its tower of victory.

The boastful hugeness, which always tries to exceed life's simplicity of limits, is an exaggeration: it is puffed up by the crowding of the non-essential, which like a noxious weed grows only to choke the essential into insignificance. Thus overladen, the education that is bursting with a miscellany of subjects, is fostered at the cost of true culture, a prodigious quantity of printed stuff is continually poured upon the mind of the people, allowing the fertile soil of creation to be buried under the debris of the heterogeneous. The commerce, which is abnormally big, is busily engaged in over-production and in trying to dig channels for its torrents of surplus across the unwilling breast of the earth. It diverts an enormous part of time and energy from life's field of creation to the imbecility of an endless repetition of things. A constant process of suicide has thus to be kept going on under conditions in which the utmost output is being extorted from machinery regulated to a speed and power far beyond life's natural rhythm.

In this perpetual race with the machine that is keeping a different measure of time, Life is hurt and humiliated. Our senses need a certain allowance of time in order to fulfil their functions properly. If we see too hastily, we do not really see; if we do not give enough time to our mind to brood over its observations or problems, it cannot produce true thoughts. But the wheels of our modern organizations drag us whirling through space and time for the sake of results that can only satisfy the miser in us, who loves to glut himself on number and quantity. The journalistic mentality, the outcome of a breathless haste, is like some shallow river bed, through which sensational floods rush off to a complete exhaustion leaving the startled banks thirsty and barren, shrouded in sand. These floods always seem to be counting the pebbles of number over which they pour themselves, heedless of the harvest that they might have helped in producing.

I remember sometime ago there appeared in the papers an account of a bird shoot in which a party of merry-makers, belonging to a high position, took part. The number of their innocent victims ran into thousands. Blood

flowed abundantly; but, I am sure, not the tinge of a blush was evident in the distinguished cheeks of these people who were proud of their appalling success. It is what they call a breaking of records, the most amazingly superficial of all satisfactions for a rational being, paying to unmeaning quantity a homage worthy of a head hunter. You all know with what an excitement of reverence these number-pickers keep count of some latest addition to their list of records, measuring even to a fraction of an inch, of a minute, of a particle. This shallowness of mind is productive of cruelty and deception.

When we artificially develop a longing for number for its own sake, a purely abstract sense of possession, then a standard of wrong valuation is established and the sacredness of human sentiments is minimised. When a newspaper of already unnecessary length advertises the great event of the publication of its two further daily editions, then it merely exploits this childish crudity in the modern mind, its fascination for the more and more in number. It helps to add one more huge organization to a host of others and, in order to startle its readers' minds into a spirit of veneration, declares how a few more inches have been added to the length of its columns and how some extra hundred copies, over and above the output of its rivals, can be printed in a minute by its own up-to-date press, thereby rousing to a pitch of ecstasy the feeling of worship for the record-breaker.

I am told that a bronze statue has been erected near the Westminister abbey, as a memorial to the British machine-gunners killed in the late war, with the following inscription on the pedestal, chosen very likely by some devout reader of the Bible: *Soul has slain thousands, but David tens of thousands.* Such an impious homage to blood-stained numbers has been made possible in the present day, when civilization takes the enormous variety of inflated disproportion from which it suffers, to be the measure of its excellence,—when its critics are claiming the first prize in the race of bloatedness before onlookers with gaping mouths. Whatever we may think of the cannibal feeding upon his fellow beings, it is some satisfaction to know that it allays his hunger and nourishes him. But when we realize that numberless individuals are made to offer their very life blood, not to fulfil human need, but to help in the increase of some record-breaking enormity of the non-essential, then we cannot help hoping that God's vengeance will strike down to the dust, from its blood-soaked altar, the demon of production, so preposterously prolific.

Once in my life, I had a very clear sight of this demon feeding upon the carcass of its victim. I have described it in another paper and must do so once more. It was when I took a trip down the Ganges between banks which were dearly familiar to me in my boyhood. The rare beauty of those spots held in the deepest reverence by centuries of lovers and worshippers lay dead and desecrated, tortured by cloven-footed commerce. The thought that the whole future generation of men would never know how divinely great it had been, was heart-breaking. But the impiety of this sacrilege does not touch in the least the profit-maker's heart, lying safe in his bulging pockets. The bare fact of this

particular happening, however painful to the lovers of this majestic river, is not however the important thing; but the deadening tendency of mind which is the cause of it, is terribly significant. In the temple of a living principle has been enshrined an iron monster, productive of things and destructive of life.

There was a time when the profession of fighting and the business of profit-gathering were restricted to specially trained groups of men, while the rest of the people had full freedom to cultivate their human personality. But because the scientific facility of communication has to-day spread its conquest in every realm of the elements, the field for fighting and profit making has also become boundless in dimension. And therefore the organization of offensive and defensive measures is taxing a large part of the resources of the whole population of the country. It means that what is merely technical is crowding into a narrow corner what is purely human. From the outside it offers an imposing spectacle; for organizations can be made symmetrical and accurate. You can make them supernormally big if only you have enough material; for they are voracious in their hunger for materials. To satisfy the growing claims of the military machine of monstrous proportions we need a devastating amount of money. And for that we need to multiply our money-making machines, which in their turn, in order too keep pace, need a parallel organization of whips and shouts in the donkey race of military expansion. The new reverence for the Deity of the Multiplication Table does not allow us to see the working of this huge joke played by the Devil himself against human destiny, with his special compound of blindness of passion joined to cleverness of science. He is trying experiments with it in the present day world, making the people knock their heads against each other automatically, and damaging things of living value in a dangerously comic manner.

We cannot maintain that detachment of mind necessary for being amused at this spectacle. For weal or for woe, the races of man *have* come close to each other; and if human history at the end is going to prove itself to be a farce, then we in India, shall also have to take part in it, if not as the funny man who deals enormous slaps, then as the other funny one whose flaming cheek produces a diverting sound at the concussion. Henceforward all our problems are world problems. It is no consolation for us to be able to say, when our own roof is burning, that the fire originated in the house of our neighbour who dwells on the opposite side of the road.

We are dangerously becoming accustomed to the fact of how easily the adorers of the big ignore the value of the human, how their infatuation produces the tragic mentality that has its worshipful tenderness for the automaton. The money that is recklessly lavished in order to manufacture and maintain the unproductive military doll has to be forcibly snatched away from the hungry, from the sick, from the tillers of the soil, who must sell their plough-bullocks to make their contribution.

I have had my experience of what water scarcity means for people who live under the tropical sun, when drinking water has to be extorted from the grip of the miserly mud, when a chance spark burns down a whole village to

ashes with not a drop of water in the neighbourhood, save tear-drops, for quenching the fire. The daily suffering, during the sultry months of summer, of numberless men and women is intense and widespread. But care is taken that this suffering must not, in the least, touch the imperfectly human, the mutilated souls, who dwell in the barracks and the offices of the organization agency.

Those whose function it is to carry on the unbroken stream of life from age to age are made to sacrifice their very life stuff in order to maintain an ample supply of saw-dust for the gigantic Doll. This equipment, a great part of which is meaningless, serves merely to fill up time and space for the purpose of giving the idol an imposing appearance of amplitude. Life is being constantly bled white merely for swelling the girth of that which is not life, which is even against life.

The complexity which leans too far away from the natural centre of gravity of the social system is compelled to build external props which themselves are unwieldy. The conflicting forces in a living society maintain their equilibrium by the help of the unwritten convention that becomes organic in the memory of the race. Things of vital importance to society should never become too difficult of comprehension for the average intelligence of the people. For that creates a profound chasm between life's need and the means of its satisfaction, and in that gaping hole all kinds of mischief find their lodging because it is beyond the reach of the entire mind of the people. The vast dimensions and the technical character of our present day written legal codes only prove what an elaborately painful arrangements of chains and screws, requiring expert help at every turn, is necessary to keep the lumbering modern deadness together.

It is useless to grumble against this; but what strikes me as a sign of extreme fanatical loyalty to the Lifeless, is the fact that while the services of learned advocates are secured for the mechanical organization called Government, living individuals, who are sensitive to pains and losses, are left to their own poor devices to come out whole from the meshes of law after safely accomplishing their journey through the heart-breaking maze of legal pathways. When it is said that before the law everybody is equal, we must know that such praise can only be reserved for God's sunlight, not merely because it is universal, but because it is simple; because it does not require the help of a professional interpreter to explain it, the next moment to be contradicted by his professional opponent helping another professional man who is a judge to a conclusion which may be very learnedly inconclusive. In fact, the uncertainty of justice which is the inevitable consequence of these difficult and complex technicalities has made the Law Court an unlicensed gambling hall in which the chances of success most often learn toward the rich.

Those who cannot imagine that civilization can ever become simple are sure to question me as to what should be done. This question expects from its answer the means as to how a path can be made, though the wilderness should remain untouched. That, of course, I do not know. But I do know that the age

has come which, through its moral earthquakes, has given warning to the pilers of dead things that the obstruction has to be removed and the way kept open for the chariot of new life to pass through its triumphal gate.

'Simplicity is primitive,' exclaims the schoolboy. No, on the contrary, it is the barbarous which is not simple, which is absurdly heterogeneous. True simplicity dwells in the white light, not because its wealth of colour is meagre, but because it has all the colour rays perfectly harmonized. Difficult technicalities only reveal some deficiency in our natural function of coordination. This function is the function of wisdom and not that of knowledge. When it is lacking then the huge and the heavy make themselves conspicuous and challenge our admiration. The acrobat in all his manoeuvres shows a skill on which the signature of technical training is displayed in prominent letters. There are people who enjoy such exhibitions more than the grace which does not spur our attention by the constant obtrusion of its points, but woos our heart by its reticent completeness, running the risk of being overlooked.

As a boy, I was familiar with a picture of simplicity which was the manifestation of a complex that had found its perfection. It was the picture of the mistress of a family, the mother of an Indian household. According to the custom of the old-world Indian family life, which is vast and intricate, there lived in the same house a large number of men and women belonging to a common circle of kinship. It had, like the solar world, its concentric planetary orbits, some very close to the centre, some extending to a vague and far-away distance. Some of the members were bigly important with their bulk and weight, and some like meteors, insignificant, yet claiming their places along with the others. There were also a great many dependents as well as numerous relatives living in separate houses, who nevertheless had their right of citizenship in the family universe. In its heart reigned its mistress, with a dignity that was graceful, with a mellowed sweetness of nature that seemed to have been maturing for ages before she had been born. The duties and responsibilities were endless and difficult; the code of behaviour was varied and subtle, but she bore it all with a simple majesty like the sun surrounded by planets which also have their own family of satellites. What was the meaning of that perfect simplicity of hers which was so beautiful? It was the ideal of unity which she had within her; she had the natural power and training to enable her to comprehend the multitudinous diversity of the whole family life in her own life. She was made one with this world, not through mechanical adjustments, but through sentiments which belong to creative life, spontaneously permeating the branching limbs of an organic body. And therefore, through her, this large household found the pliant delicacy and tenderness of a living creation. It was not an aggregate of parts, but an assimilation in which all the parts lost their dividing limits.

The doubt may be felt whether the mistress of this household did not owe the beauty of her simple personality to her ignorance of many things that are being constantly added to our knowledge in the present time. My answer is, that perfection is something which is positive, it can never be based upon an

emptiness of negation. It is not right to say that the ancient civilization of Greece had its perfect form only because in those days the Greeks did not know a good many things that our modern schoolboys know. It is never true that only the savages can evolve a harmony of life in their society. The Greeks, through their intellect and imagination brought all their thoughts, acquirements and surroundings to conform to the rhythm of a central life. If the Indian mother of the old type had been taught that the earth goes round the sun, or had been trained in an intelligent appreciation of the hygienic laws of living, it would have been all the better for her. But what was even more valuable in her was that gift which by life's magic could bring the miscellaneous into a perfection of balance.

Our personality is our own field of creation. And in order to make it perfect we must know that in all art every display of power is vulgar, that an artist is truly humble in his own creation. He despises making a show of material in his work and a parade of the difficulty in its process. For the power which accumulates things and manipulates them is fundamentally different from the genius which transmutes them into a perfect unity.

God is humble in his creation. He does not keep his muscles bared; nor does he go out of his way to attract our attention to the store of his things or to the account book of their cost. He gives out *himself* in the abundance of his nature. His last message of harmony in this material world in brought by Life which has her mission to simplify the materials that are numerous and forces that are desultory. She wins the hard heart of a rocky soil and covers its naked barbarity with her merciful green. Thus in the patient course of ages she has been spreading her ministration of beauty and fruitfulness over an earth which once had been destitute, though huge and multifarious in its constitution. When this life is menaced then the whole future of a self-sustaining plenitude is in danger.

We know the slow progress of the history of the desert. The trees are cut down with an extravagant ruthlessness, countless herds of goats and other animals are allowed to destroy in a wholesale manner the struggling shoots of life over vast tract of land. The forest of noble trees is reduced to paper pulp for the production of journalism, a great part of which circulates lies in its news and advertisements, and carries disease germs for the moral man. The loss of trees affects the rainfall, it lets loose floods that tear down the fertile soil from the breast of the earth, it interferes with the work of storing water by provident Nature in her sub-soil reservoirs. During some period of such exploitation of life the outer magnificence of civilization shows an amazing result in its buildings and ships and furniture. At last the dragon of the desert suddenly shows its parched white tongue on the horizon, creeping nearer and nearer to our habitations, sweeping away with its gigantic tail the hoarded capital of life to its last penny.

To-day there are vast stretches of desert on this earth where we see from the traces of dry river beds that once water flowed, trees flourished, rain fell, and that food was grown for cities now lying buried. It is evident that, with the

complexity of living, through the disproportionate growth of non-life, the non-essential constantly extorted taxes from life, till life itself was made bankrupt by the extravagant egoism of man. There are invisible writings on the blank pages of these desolate places which tell the story of how some civilization had for ages elaborately busied itself in preparing its own burial ground.

The same thing has been going on in the moral and spiritual region of society for a long time, and all life-giving sentiments, all creative faith is being laid low by the clever, by the greedy. The huge and hungry organizations are rudely elbowing out the personal man. Before long humanity will surely realize that its life-stuff has been exhausted, that the office has swallowed up the home and that the progress of the fast spreading dominion of death can no longer be checked.

We have observed in the primitive art of prehistoric times how nearly all its pictures represent animal life. They are full of the touch that shows an intense interest in the subject. We see among the savages how they have some special animal for their tribal deity to whom they trace their ancestry. The reason is that man at that time had not completely outgrown the animal; he was not too proudly conscious of the fact that he was human. The animals have their greater perfection than man, as animals. During our brute stage we could proudly imagine ourselves to be like lions or bulls and therefore better than the others who were mere men. In the initial stage of man's growth this animal mentality gave him strength in the struggle for existence. The primitive man's admiration of animals for their superior physical efficiency is transferred to-day to the machine, and the modern man is busy reducing himself into a mechanical perfection. In the remote time, when he imagined that he was a noble animal, he still had in his future a vast field of life full of colour and music. Now when he imagines, with an unbounded sense of admiration that he is a sub-wheel of an efficient machine, he has before him only that colossal office hall where King Death holds his puppet dance with dead hearts.

Organizations we must have. These help to simplify the application of energy for attaining our purpose. They are our tools and men are tool-making creatures. And yet, we must never forget that we are living beings and that our tools are non-living. They should not be allowed to overwhelm our life with the space and time they occupy, the burden they impose, the special mentality they produce, and the obstruction they offer to the expression of personality. When our tools are in harmony with our life, they become an extension of our body, they acquire the rhythm of our hand; our mind thinks, our heart throbs through them. Life, when it has unity with its agents, its materials, finds efficiency without losing freedom. Our body has its skeleton, its organization of bones, which is non-living, ugly, inexpressive. But because it yields to the dominance of life, it helps not only in life's purposes but in its expression. Occasionally the skeletal system tries to overstep its limits; ossification sets in and shackles and strangles life till it is dead. There was a time when men used

heavy armour in their battles. This was an artificial extension of bones, where bones were not. Men suffered this imposition for the sake of a purpose. The use of armour was limited to a comparatively few persons and to short periods of time. But even then it was found that those who dispensed with it won in the end.

We can see from this, that life's alliance with the non-living may become so necessary for certain purposes, that the latter is allowed to proclaim its own martial law where its place was once that of a servant. For the sake of life the rule of such law should occupy the least possible space and time. But when some universal passion, some ambitious purpose, becomes the dominant force in a society, man's tools grow in power and weight more than his life.

There was a time when man's innate love for pomp and power found its vicarious satisfaction in the magnificence of the military glory of kings and ruling classes. Then he could see the manifestation of his wealth in his temples, and in his religious and communal ceremonies. His prosperity found its shrine in a common enjoyment, and enriched his social life. Freed from the giddy round of competition and the burden of personal luxury, the people as a whole had an ample field for cultivating their social life, which is the completeness of life. They occasionally suffered from the tyranny of the king and his representatives, but they accepted or resisted it as they do the visitations of famine or flood; it did not come from their own midst. They suffered from it, but were not a party to it. This enabled their social life to survive the rise and fall of kingly dynasties and saved it from the self-multiplying hydra-headed tyranny of the non-human. When society is living, moral value becomes for it the highest value. Therefore, under ideal conditions, the best men gifted with spiritual qualities find their homage from the people. Such homage is never degrading for those who offer it. On the contrary, through acknowledgement of the best in man they participate in it. But to-day there are whole multitudes of voluntary slaves, who wear their lives out for the unworthy ones, for the profit-makers, for those who know how to clothe their falsehood in immaculate tailoring. The multitude has come to imagine that all this is civilization and that it is good.

There are those in the East who have slavishly come to believe that superstitions which are modern denote progress. They are proudly ready to be yoked to the car of the exploiter, of the ambitious, and think that the burden they bear is being transmuted into merit in some fools' paradise of their own imagining. They suspect, when I say this, that I am a reactionary,— one of those fanatical conservatives who blame the sun for keeping time that does not agree with their own family watch, the watch which they have forgotten to wind for centuries. But those who know me know that I have ever fought against obedience to the unmeaning, to traditions that are dead; against all imitations that only succeed in increasing intellectual and moral snobbishness. I believe in life, only when it is progressive; and in progress, only when it is in harmony with life. I preach the freedom of man from the servitude of the fetish of hugeness, the non-human. I refuse to be styled an enemy of

enlightenment because I do not stand on the side of the giant who swallows life, but on the side of Jack, the human, who defies the big, the gross, and wins victory at the end.

I conclude with a quotation from one of Po-Chu-I's poems in which the great Chinese poet has shown into what vulgar mouths the offerings of false worship find their destination:

> Deep the waters of the Black Pool, coloured like ink;
> They say a Holy Dragon lives there, whom men have never seen,
> Beside the pool they have built a shrine; the authorities have established a ritual;
> A dragon by itself remains a dragon, but men make it a God.
> Meats lie stacked on the rocks of the Pool's shore;
> Wine flows on the grass in front of the shrine,
> I do not know, of all those offerings, how much the Dragon eats;
> But the mice of the woods and the foxes of the hills are continually drunk and sated.
> Why are the foxes so lucky?
> What have the sucking pigs done,
> That year by year they should be killed, merely to glut the foxes?
> That the foxes are robbing the Sacred Dragon and eating his sucking-pig,
> Beneath the nine-fold depths of this Pool, does he know or not?
>
> (*Waley's Translation*)

The modern meaning of this poem is, that meat and drink are offered at the shrine of Democracy, innumerable lives are sacrificed, but only plutocrats and autocrats in various disguise thrive on them; the idol does not know it, and the pious worshippers smile in foolish satisfaction.

1926

THE MEANING OF ART

THERE IS A remarkable verse in the Atharva Veda which attributes all that is great in the human world to superfluity. It says:

Ritam satyam tapo rashtram sramo dharmascha karmacha,
Bhūtam bhavishyat ucchiste viryam lakshmīrbalam bale

Righteousness, truth, great endeavours, empire, religion, enterprise, heroism and prosperity, the past and the future dwell in the surpassing strength of the surplus.

The meaning of it is that man expresses himself through his superabundance which largely overlaps his absolute need.

The renowned Vedic commentator, Sāyaṇāchārya, says:

Yajñe hutasishtasya odanasya sarvajagatkāranabhūta
Brahmābhedena stutih kriyate.

The food offering which is left over after the completion of sacrificial rites is praised because it is symbolical of Brahma, the original source of the universe.

According to this explanation, Brahma is boundless in his superfluity which inevitably finds its expression in the eternal world process. Here we have the doctrine of the genesis of creation, and therefore of the origin of art. Of all living creatures in the world man has his vital and mental energy vastly in excess of his need, which urges him to work in various lines of creation for its own sake. Like Brahma himself, he takes joy in productions that are unnecessary to him, and therefore representing his extravagance and not his hand-to-mouth penury. The voice that is just enough can speak and cry to the extent needed for every day use, but that which is abundant sings, and in it we find our joy. Art reveals man's wealth of life, which seeks its freedom in forms of perfection which are an end in themselves.

All that is inert and inanimate is limited to the bare fact of existence. Life is perpetually creative because it contains in itself that surplus which ever overflows the boundaries of the immediate time and space, restlessly pursuing its adventure of expression in the varied forms of self-realization. Our living body has its vital organs that are important in maintaining its efficiency, but this body is not a mere convenient sac for the purpose of holding stomach, heart, lungs and brains; it is an image,—its highest value is in the fact that it communicates its personality. It has colour, shape and movement, most of which belong to the superfluous, that are needed only for self-expression and not for self-preservation.

At the root of all creation there is a paradox, a logical contradiction. Its process is in the perpetual reconciliation of two contrary forces. We have already said that the natural urging of the surplus, the *ucchista*, is the motive force of all that makes for perfection. But the boundless overflow must yield

to the bounds of finitude for its manifestation. Truth must become real by the definition of the infinite. We have two contradictory utterances in the Upanishad about the origin of all things. On the one hand, it has been said:

> *Anandādhyeva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante.*
>
> The universe has come out of joy.

On the other hand, there is the verse which says:

> *Sa tapo'tapyatah sa tapastaptvā sarvamasrijat yadidam kincha.*
>
> God made penance, and with the heat generated therefrom he created all that there is.

The freedom of joy and the restraint of *tapasyā*, both are equally true in the creative expression of Brahma.

This limitation of the unlimited is personality: God is personal where he creates.

> *Kavirmanīshī paribhūh svayambhūryatatathyāto'rthan*
> *Vyadadhāt shāswatibhyah samābhyah.*
>
> Where he dispenses the inner necessities of existence in an accurate measure and for all time he is the poet, the lord of mind, the sovereign power, the self-creator.

He accepts the limits of his own law and the play goes on which is this world whose reality is in its relation to the Person. Things are distinct not in their essence but in their appearance, in other words, in their relation to one to whom they appear. This is art, the truth of which is not in substance or logic, but in expression. Abstract truth may belong to science and metaphysics, but the world of reality belongs to art.

The world as an art is the play of the Supreme Person revelling in image making. Try to find out the ingredients of the image—they elude you, they never reveal to you the eternal secret of appearance. In your effort to capture life as expressed in living tissue, you will find carbon, nitrogen and many other things utterly unlike life, but never life itself. The appearance does not offer any commentary of itself through its material. You may call it *māyā* and pretend to disbelieve it, but the great artist, the *Māyāvin*, is not hurt. For art is *maya*, it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is. It never tries to conceal its evasiveness, it mocks, even its own definition and plays the game of hide and seek through its constant flight in changes.

And thus life, which is an incessant explosion of freedom, finds its metre in a continual falling back in death. Every day is a death, every moment even. If not, there would be an amorphous desert of deathlessness eternally dumb and still. So life is *māyá*,—as moralists love to say, it *is* and *is not*. All that we find in it is the rhythm through which it shows itself. Are rocks and minerals any better? Has not science shown us the fact that the ultimate difference between one element and another is only that of rhythm? The fundamental distinction of gold from mercury lies merely in the difference of rhythm in their

respective atomic constitution, like the distinction of the king from his subject which is not in their different constituents, but in the different metres of their situation and circumstance. There you find behind the scene the Artist, the Magician of rhythm, who imparts an appearance of substance to the unsubstantial.

What is this rhythm? It is the movement generated and regulated by harmonious restriction. This is the creative force in the hand of the artist. So long as words remain in uncadenced prose form, they do not give any lasting feeling of reality. The moment they are taken and put into rhythm they vibrate into a radiance. It is the same with the rose. In the pulp of its petals you may find everything that went to make the rose, but the rose which is *māyā*, an image, is lost; its finality which has the touch of the infinite is gone. The rose appears to me to be still, but because of its metre of composition it has a lyric of movement within that stillness, which is the same as the dynamic quality of a picture that has a perfect harmony. It produces a music in our consciousness by giving it a swing of motion synchronous with its own. Had the picture consisted of a disharmonious aggregate of colours and lines, it would be deadly still.

In perfect rhythm, the art-form becomes like the stars which in their seeming stillness are never still, like a motionless flame that is nothing but movement. A great picture is always speaking, but news from a newspaper, even of some tragic happening, is still-born. Some news may be a mere commonplace in the obscurity of a journal; but give it a proper rhythm and it will never cease to shine. That is art. It has the magic wand which gives undying reality to all things it touches, and relates them to the personal being in us. We stand before its productions and say: I know you as I know myself, you are real.

Let me repeat here my remark about the function of art from a previous paper of mine: 'When we talk of aesthetics in relation to arts we must know that it is not about beauty in its ordinary meaning but in that deeper meaning which a poet has expressed in his utterance: truth is beauty, beauty truth. An artist may paint a picture of a decrepit person not pleasing to the eye, and yet we call it perfect when we become deeply conscious of its reality.'

Hopeless tragedies of life can never technically be called beautiful, but when appearing on the background of art they delight us because of the convincingness of their reality. It only proves that every object which fully asserts its existence to us because of its inherent finality, is beautiful; it is what is called in Sanskrit *manohara*, the stealer of the mind,—the mind which stands between the knower and the known. We have our primal sympathy for all things that exist, for when realized they stimulate the consciousness of our own existence. The fact that we exist has its truth in the fact that everything else does exist.

The *I am* in me realizes its own extension, its own infinity whenever it truly realizes something else. Unfortunately, owing to our limitations and a thousand and one pre-occupations, a great part of our world, though closely

surrounding us, is far away from the lamp-post of our attention; it is dim, it passes by us, a caravan of shadows, like the landscape seen in the night from the window of an illuminated railway compartment: the passenger knows that the outside world exists, that it is important, but for the time being the railway carriage for him is far more significant. If among the innumerable objects in this world there be a few that come under the full illumination of our soul and thus assume reality for us, they constantly cry to our creative mind for a permanent representation. They belong to the same domain as the desire of ours which represents the longing for the permanence of our own self.

I do not mean to say that things to which we are bound by the tie of self-interest have the inspiration of reality: on the contrary, these are eclipsed by the shadow of our own self. The servant is not more real to us than the beloved. The narrow emphasis of utility diverts our attention from the complete man to the merely useful man. The thick label of market price obliterates the ultimate value of reality. It has been said in the *Brihad-Aranyaka*:

The desire for the son does not make him dear, the son is dear for the sake of the self.

That is to say, in the son the father becomes conscious of a reality which is immediately and profoundly within him. He is delighted not because his son is perfect and beautiful, but because his son is indubitably real to him,—our joy, as I have said before, being the disinterested perception of the real. This is the source of our delight in all arts and literature, where reality is presented to us on the pedestal of its own absolute value.

All the deep impressions in our mind are accompanied by some emotions which set up their own variety of tremors in our consciousness. This agitation modulates our voice and movements and impels us to all creative display of colours, forms and sounds. This reminds me of the occasion when I saw inscribed on the wall of a school building, in exaggerated characters: 'Bipin is an egregious ass!' It amused me, and at the same time offered me an answer to the question, *what is art.*

No one takes the least trouble to proclaim the information that Bipin is tall, or that he suffers from a cold. Ordinarily our mind is soberly grey in its impression of Bipin. But when we love him or hate him, the fact of Bipin's existence becomes glowingly evident on the agitated background of passion. Then our mind can no longer remain neutral; it detaches the idea of Bipin from the immense multitude of what is non-significant to us, and according to its own power our mind tries to make him as unavoidably real to others as he is to ourselves.

The boy who angrily longed to give permanence to his indignant estimate of Bipin and make it universally accepted had nothing but his inadequate charcoal and ineffectual training, whereas his forefathers of the primitive age, when excited to anger, not only could give vent to it effectively in action, but also in an expression of gorgeous ferocity by the help of pigments, feathers, tinsel and war dance. That writing on the school wall, craving immortality, sadly begged for colours and rhythmic lines to be like its glorious congeners, the fresco paintings of the world-renowned caves, where

the artists attempted to emphasise their estimate of certain personalities, and of sundry incidents, into permanence.

As art creations are emotional representations of facts and ideas they can never be like the product of a photographic camera which is passively receptive of lights and shadows in all their indiscriminate details. Our scientific mind is unbiased; it accepts facts with a cold-blooded curiosity that has no preference. The artistic mind is strongly biased, and that bias not only guides it in its fastidious selection of the subject, but also in that of its details. It throws coloured lights of emphasis on its theme in such a manner that it attains a character which clearly distinguishes it from its fellows. The skylarks of science offer corroboration of their truth through their similarity, the skylarks of artists and poets through their dissimilarity. If Shelley's poem on this bird were just like that of Wordsworth, it should have been rejected for its lack of truth.

As art embodies our personal, estimate of a thing, or character, or circumstance, the artist in his work does not follow nature in its capacious heterogeneity, but his own human nature which is selective. By leaving out whatever is non-essential for his own purpose of expression and intensifying what is significant, he brings out the truth of his creation much more vividly than he would if he copied actuality which is strictly impartial to whatever exists. The wholeness of God's creation is immensely vast and it is not possible for any detail to be too defiantly discrepant in its relation to it. But the background of human expression is small and therefore it is never possible to accommodate nature's details in our art compositions. It is childish to expect the primeval forest in the perspective of our garden plot, or an illustration of natural history in our works which modulate fact to the tune of our personality.

Once the question had been asked to me as to the place I assigned to music in my theory of art. I am bound to answer it, and I take this opportunity to offer my explanation.

Music is the most abstract of all arts, as mathematics is in the region of science. In fact, these two have a deep relationship with each other. Mathematics as the logic of number and dimension is the basis of our scientific knowledge. When taken out of its concrete associations with cosmic phenomena and reduced to symbols it reveals its grand structural majesty, the inevitableness of its own perfect concord. But there is also such a thing as the magic of mathematics which works at the root of all appearances, producing harmony of unity,—the cadence of inter-relation of the parts bringing them under the dominion of the whole. This rhythm of harmony has been extracted from its usual context and exhibited through the medium of sound. And thus the pure essence of expressiveness in existence is offered in music. In sound it finds the least resistance and has a freedom unencumbered by the burden of facts and thoughts. It gives it a power to arouse in us an intense feeling of reality; it seems to lead us into the soul of all things and make us feel the very breath of inspiration flowing from the supreme creative joy.

In the pictorial, plastic and verbal arts the object and our feelings with regard to it are closely associated, like the rose and its perfume. In music the feeling, extracted in sound, becomes itself an independent object. It assumes a tune-form which is definite, but a meaning which is indefinable and yet grips our mind with a sense of absolute truth.

There came a time, centuries ago, in Bengal, when the divine love drama that had its eternal play in human souls was vividly revealed by a personality radiating its intimate realization of God. The mind of a whole people was stirred by the vision of the world as an instrument through which sounded our invitation to the meeting of bliss. The ineffable mystery of God's love-call taking shape in an endless panorama of colours and forms, finding its chorus in the symphony of human affections, inspired activity in a music that overflowed the restrictions of classical conventionalism. Our *kirtan* music in Bengal came to its being like a star flung up by a burning whirlpool of emotion in the heart of a whole people.

There come in our history occasions when the consciousness of a large multitude becomes suddenly illumined with the recognition of something which rises far above the triviality of daily happenings. Such an occasion there was when the voice of Buddha reached distant shores across all physical and moral impediments. Then our life and our world found their profound meaning of reality in their relation to the central person who offered us emancipation of love. And men, in order to make this great human experience ever memorable, determined to do the impossible; they made rocks to speak, stones to sing, caves to remember; the cry of joy and hope took immortal forms along hills and deserts, across barren solitudes and populous cities. A gigantic creative endeavour built up its triumph in stupendous carvings, defying obstacles that were overwhelming. Such heroic activity over the greater part of the Eastern continent clearly answers the question: *What is art?*—It is the response of man's creative soul to the call of the real.

But the individual mind according to its temperament and training has its own recognition or reality in some of its special aspects. We can see from the Gandhara figures of Buddha that the artistic influence of Greece put its emphasis on the scientific aspect, on anatomical accuracy, while the purely Indian mind dwelt on the symbolic aspect and tried to give expression to the soul of Buddha, never acknowledging the limitations of realism. For the adventurous spirit of the great European sculptor, Rodin, the most significant aspect of reality is the unceasing struggle of the incomplete for its freedom from the fetters of imperfection, whereas before the naturally introspective mind of the Eastern artist the real appears in its ideal form of fulfilment.

Therefore, when we talk of such a fact as Indian Art, it indicates some truth based upon the Indian tradition and temperament. At the same time we must know that there is no such thing as absolute caste restriction in human cultures; they ever have the power to combine and produce new variations, and such combinations have been going on for ages proving the truth of the deep unity of human psychology. It is admitted that in Indian art the Persian

lement found no obstacles, and there are signs of various other alien nfluences. China and Japan have no hesitation in acknowledging their debt o India in their artistic and spiritual growth of life. Fortunately for our ivilizations all such intermingling happened when professional art critics vere not rampant and artists were not constantly nudged by the warning elbow f classifiers in their choice of inspiration. Our artists were never tiresomely eminded of the obvious fact that they were Indian; and in consequence they ad the freedom to be naturally Indian in spite of all the borrowings that they ndulged in.

The sign of greatness in great geniuses is their enormous capacity for orrowing, very often without their knowing it; they have unlimited credit in he world market of culture. Only mediocrities are ashamed and afraid of orrowing, for they do not know how to pay back the debt in their own coin. ven the most foolish of critics does not dare blame Shakespeare for what he penly appropriated from outside his own national inheritance. The human oul is proud of its comprehensive sensitiveness; it claims its freedom of entry verywhere when it is fully alive and awake. We congratulate ourselves on the act, and consider it a sign of our being alive in soul, that European thoughts nd literary forms found immediate hospitality in Bengali literature from the ery beginning of its contact with our mind. It ushered in a great revolution n the realm of our literary expression.

Enormous changes have taken place, but our Indian soul has survived the hock and has vigorously thriven upon this cataclysm. It only shows that hough human mentality, like the earth's atmosphere, has undoubtedly ifferent temperatures in different geographical zones, yet it is not walled up nto impassable compartments and the circulation of the common air over the ntire globe continues to have its wholesome effect. So let us take heart and nake daring experiments, venture out into the open road in the face of all sks, go through experiences in the great world of human mind defying nholy prohibitions preached by prudent little critics, laughing at them when n their tender solicitude for our safety they ask our artists to behave the good hildren and never to cross the threshold of their school-room.

Fearfully trying always to conform to a conventional type is a sign of nmaturity. Only in babies is individuality of physiognomy blurred, and herefore personal distinction not strongly marked. Childishness is a mentality hat can easily be generalised: children's babbling has the same sound-ottering everywhere, their toys are very nearly similar. But adult age is difficult f classification, it is composed of individuals who claim recognition of their ersonal individuality which is shown not only in its own uniqueness of nanner but also in its own special response to all stimulations from outside.

I strongly urge our artists, vehemently to deny their obligation carefully o produce something that can be labelled as Indian art according to some old orld mannerism. Let them proudly refuse to be herded into a pen like randed beasts that are treated as cattle and not as cows. Science is impersonal, has its one aspect which is merely universal and therefore abstract; but art

is personal and, therefore, through it the universal manifests itself in the guise of the individual, physiology expresses itself in physiognomy, philology in literature. Science is a passenger in a railway train of generalization; there reasoning minds from all directions come to make their journey together in a similar conveyance. Art is a solitary pedestrian, who walks alone among the multitude, continually assimilating various experiences, unclassifiable and uncatalogued.

There was a time when human races lived in comparative segregation and therefore the art adventurers had their experience within a narrow range of limits deeply-cut grooves of certain common characteristics. But to-day that range has vastly widened, claiming from us a much greater power of receptivity than what we were compelled to cultivate in former ages. If to-day we have a living soul that is sensitive to ideas and to beauty of form, let it prove its capacity by accepting all that is worthy of acceptance, not according to some blind injunction of custom or fashion, but in following one's instinct for eternal value—the instinct which is a God-given gift to all real artists. Even then our art is sure to have a quality which is Indian, but it must be an inner quality and not an artificially fostered formalism, and therefore not be too obtrusively obvious and abnormally self-conscious.

When in the name of Indian art we cultivate with deliberate aggressiveness a certain bigotry born of the habit of a past generation, we smother our soul under idiosyncrasies unearthed from buried centuries. These are like masks with exaggerated grimaces, that fail to respond to the ever changing play of life.

Art is not a gorgeous sepulchre immovably brooding over a lonely eternity of vanished years. It belongs to the procession of life, making constant adjustment with surprises, exploring unknown shrines of reality along its path of pilgrimage to a future which is as different from the past as the tree from the seed. Art represents the inexhaustible magnificence of creative spirit; it is generous in its acceptance and generous in its bestowal; it is unique in its manner and universal in its appeal; it is hospitable to the All because it has the wealth which is its own; its vision is new though its view may be old; it carries its special criterion of excellence within itself and therefore contemptuously refuses to be brow-beaten into conformity with a rhetoric manufactured by those who are not in the secret of the subtle mysteries of creation, who want to simplify through their academic code of law that which is absolutely simple through its spontaneity.

The art ideal of a people may take fixed root in a narrow soil of tradition developing a vegetable character, producing a monotonous type of leaves and flowers in a continuous round of repetitions. Because it is not disturbed by a mind which ever seeks the unattained, and because it is held firm by a habit which piously discourages allurements of all adventures, it is neither helped by the growing life of the people nor does it help to enrich that life. It remains confined to coteries of specialists who nourish it with delicate attention and feel proud of the ancient flavour of its aristocratic exclusiveness. It is not a

stream that flows through and fertilises the soil, but a rare wine stored in a dark cellar underground, acquiring a special stimulation through its artificially nurtured, barren antiquity. In exchange for a freedom of movement which is the prerogative of vigorous youth, we may gain a static perfection of senility that has minted its wisdom into hard and rounded maxims. Unfortunately, there are those who believe it an advantage for a child to be able to borrow its grandparents' age and be spared the trouble and risk of growing, and think that it is a sign of wealthy respectability for an artist lazily to cultivate a monotonously easy success by means of some hoarded patrimony of tradition.

And yet we may go too far if we altogether reject tradition in the cultivation of art, and it is an incomplete statement of truth to say that habits have the sole effect of deadening our mind. The tradition which is helpful is like a channel that helps the current to flow. It is open where the water runs onward, guarding it only where there is danger in deviation. The bee's life in its channel of habit has no opening,—it revolves within a narrow circle of perfection. Man's life has time-honoured institutions which are its organized habits. When these act as enclosures, then the result may be perfect, like a bee-hive of wonderful precision of form, but unsuitable for the mind which has unlimited possibilities of progress.

Before I close my address let me take this opportunity to ask our artists to realize the greatness of their vocation: it is to take a creative part in the festival of life, the festival which is to give expression to the infinite in man. In our everyday world we live in poverty; our resources have to be husbanded with care; our strength becomes exhausted and we come to our God as beggars. On festival days, we display our wealth and say to Him that we are even as He is; and we are not afraid to spend. This is the day when we bring to Him our gift of joy. For we truly meet God, when we come to Him, with our offerings and not our wants, and such offerings need Art for its vehicle.

I need have no anxiety about the great world to which I have been born. The sun does not wait to be trimmed by me. But from the early morning all my thoughts are occupied by the little world of my *self*. Its importance is owing to the fact that I have a world given to me which is *mine*, which depends for its perfection on my own creative soul. It is great because I have the power to make it worthy of its relationship with me; it is great, because by its help I can offer my own hospitality to the God of all the world.

1926

'AMERICAN EXPERIENCE'

THIS AGE IS like a precocious child delighting in its up-to-date toy of a megaphone that mercilessly exaggerates fugitive whispers, making them overheard by the whole world. It helps to keep up the ceaseless hubbub of a dust storm that has the same sweeping welcome for flowers as for rotten leaves. In the days when the means of publicity were limited, literature could easily maintain its dignity, shunning the contact of hourly gossip and still-born rumours by allowing a scanty and distant hospitality on its fringe for all literary immigrants not worthy of permanent citizenship. But the contrary is the case to-day, when vast accommodation is offered to the vagabond and the non-descript, bringing them into daily intimacy with public life unheedful of possible contamination. World-wide organizations of news-pickers and paragraph-makers have been established with the object of catering for an abnormally busy people with an unwholesome craving four promiscuous facts and desultory topics,—a veritable intellectual drug habit.

The constant demand for a mental narcotic that ends in smoke and ashes, that destroys delicacy of taste and healthy appetite for nutrition, encourages illicit traffic and adulteration. I have had my personal experience of it once, when on a lecturing tour in the United States. Some persons belonging to a detective agency, evidently in the pay of interested individuals, came to me with the news that the Hindu revolutionist party in San Francisco had decided to kill me owing to their disagreement with my political views. This canard went round the papers and when I sent a protest, expressing my disbelief, it was not published, possibly in deference to a political need for strengthening the prejudice against Hindu settlers in America on the eve of an anti-Asiatic legislation, or because the news was too rich in sensation to allow any doubt to rob it of its sparkle for the sake of mere justice.

Shortly after my return to India the news reached me, through Japanese papers, that a law suit had been instituted against the above-mentioned party, accusing it of secret attempts at overthrowing British rule in India. My name was dragged into this case alleging that I had taken money from the Germans deceitfully to serve their purpose while in America, and at the same time to dig for my own country underground tunnels of dark politics. I began to receive letters from your people full of reproaches for having betrayed the trust of a confiding nation whose guest I had been in the disguise of an idealist. I sent an explanatory cablegram to President Wilson, asking for his protection, which remained unacknowledged.

This was the time when the American people all of a sudden seemed furiously to remember that blood was thicker than water and to forget that it was they who had forcibly severed their political connection with a nation to which they were related by blood. The idea that struck me, through various such instances, made me think that while Aristocracy strenuously cultivates self-respect, often at the cost of material profit, and guards a high standard of

culture against deterioration, undiluted Democracy has a tendency to glide down to the lazy level of the average, for all its struggle is to add to its rights, not to build up a high tower of excellence. It makes a deliberate study of the laws of the dark patches in the human intellect, wherewith to help itself to create an atmosphere of delusion through hints, gestures, yells and startling lies, for the purpose of stupefying the popular mind. Once when I was in Chicago I saw everywhere on the town walls once single name blazened in big letters in an endless round of repetition, like the whirling monotony of a Dervish dance that dazes one's mind into vacuity. Evidently the name belonged to some candidate for political election. But what an insult to the people, who are supposed to represent the supreme power in their government, openly to apply to them the spell of hypnotism in place of reason, as the medicine man does in the heart of Africa!

The same want of respect for the rational in the popular mind has induced the greed of dollars to open classes for teaching the art of profitable mystification, psychological tricks to help the sale of commodities in spite of the buyers, seductive stratagems of advertisement for the purpose of what amounts to bamboozling. This mentality has its analogy in India where the vast majority of the population, which is non-Brahmin, is allowed a crudely superficial culture and modes of worship that are but a survival of primitive forms of Mesmeric rites. The effect has been a gradual degeneracy of the Brahmins themselves, a vigorously rapid spread of the rank weeds of unreason choking the growth of higher life, creating dark shelters for religious charlatism, and a dense entanglement of bigotry that obstructs progress at every step. We have sadly learnt how the want of confidence in the best in man draws away life's sap from what is best in us, diverting it to what is childish and commonplace.

I am perfectly aware that as a great nation you have your complex personality, full of apparent self-contradictions, which loses its mystery of a living truth directly it is defined in sharp lines, like a fragment of notation whose full musical meaning is not known. For instance, when we say that America is materialistic, we speak of a fact which is too apparent to be completely true. I have had reason to believe that there is a strong current of spiritual idealism flowing beneath the surface soil of the American mind. The unmitigated industrialism in your world, with no other ideal but a breathless multiplication of materials, must of necessity produce a deep longing in your minds for realizing in life the eternal value of the spirit. I have no doubt that this ever and anon finds its outlet in individuals who, though few in number, truly represent the unnumbered generations of your future. Properly to know a people one must know such men who seemingly contradict the supposed nature of the nation, remaining half hidden behind the vast obvious, like the thin wick in the heart of a capacious lamp. As this is not possible for me for want of opportunity, I can only offer you, for what it is worth, a brief description of my own personal experiences which led me to form my opinion about America, and disinclined me to risk any recurrence of the same.

After my visit to Japan in 1916, I crossed over to California, following an

invitation to lecture in some of the principal towns of the United States. The subject of my address was *Nationalism* which, when read in the two principal universities of Tokyo, had with an uncomfortable suddenness reduced the temperature of my welcome to freezing point. I believe it was only tolerated in the United States because the American people, in the pride of their own solid common sense, could indulgently excuse extravagant ideas about practical matters from an Oriental dreamer, though they entertained an unaccountable confidence in his knowledge of the occult, in his spiritual prestige that might confer credit in some ever-solvent bank in the Kingdom of Heaven. I remember how, after one of my lectures, I was approached by one who wished to learn from me personal secrets about some other individual whom I had never known. I felt sure that to this person my lecture must have appeared most profoundly incomprehensible, in order to win for me his admiring faith in my supernatural gift. However I have nothing to complain about this lecture of mine, which helped me to earn from your country a small fund for my Institution, and recognition from its readers in continental Europe.

In this essay I discussed how the Western cult of the self-worship of the Nation has gathered its victims from alien continents, exploiting and insulting the greater part of the globe in the blind pride of its physical prowess, while resenting any suspicion of menace from those whom it injured; how it has caused the greatest problem in the world to-day by allowing the explosive passions of hatred and contempt to accumulate in the dark chasm that has been kept open between the two hemispheres.

Meanwhile the great war in Europe ceased, like the frenzied shrieks of a maniac demon exhausted at last into sleep, though the groans of its angry dream still convulsed the weary peace of the night. I strongly felt that, under the continued threat of impending catastrophe likely to involve the whole human world in desolating hostilities, every individual to-day should realize his responsibility for training the mind of the present generation to enable it to see all its important problems in the perspective of universal man. For the most outstanding fact of our age is that the drama of our destiny to-day has the whole world for its stage. Let the politicians mishandle this world situation according to their tradition of nationalistic fanaticism, but the rest of us should have the power to think and act upon a broadly human basis of behaviour.

Having this in mind I started an institution in our country which was to represent our faith in the solidarity of the human races, our aspiration to bridge the widely gaping gulf between the East and West. My idea was that such an institution should be a creation on which the different peoples of the world should leave their individual signature of acceptance. And when I went to the United States in 1921 I was confident that my appeal would find a ready response in a land which in its Eastern and Western outlooks touches the two great seas from whose bosom rises the sun to light the continents of Europe and Asia.

The letter which I wrote to India from New York will explain the mission that occupied by thoughts at that time:

> In every age and in every country facts are given to us in order that we may provide with them some special expression of truth. Facts are like atoms of gases. They fight with or else fly away from one another. But when they are united into a drop of dew they attain beauty and reality. Man must have that creative magic to bring the facts of his time into some unity of creation. The most important of all facts in the present age is that the East and West have met. So long as it remains a mere fact, it will give rise to interminable conflicts. It is the mission of all men of faith to raise this fact into truth. I only wish you had been with me in Europe! You would know at once what is the purpose of the modern age; what is the cry of man, which the politicians never hear. There were politicians too in the courts of the Mughal Emperors. They have left nothing behind them, but ruins. But Kabir and Nanak! They have bequeathed to us their imperishable faith in the unity of Man through God's love.

Though I was sure that the problem with which I meant to deal in my work was not exclusively Indian, that it equally concerned the vital and moral interest of the west, it would have been unreasonable for me not to be reconciled to the rude fact that mine was not the voice that could carry such message to the heart of the American people. It was as futile to complain of some incompatibility between a particular seed and a soil in moral matters, as to make it a grievance if the orchard in New York rejected the mango tree from its hospitality.

This was the first time in my life when I breathed the same privileged air with some of the denizens of the giant world of finance. I felt small, but my welcome to their accommodation proved to be still smaller, almost like that of the needle's eye to a camel. It cannot be said that I made the egregious mistake of thinking that the people's heart was in their bankers' keep; on the contrary, I did try my best to approach it directly with the help of friends; but to my utter dismay I found it barred by an unmerited discourtesy, insulting me with the suspicion that I was a political schemer who was trying to exploit the good-natured credulity of your country.

I was told by some of my best friends there that powerful propaganda seemed to be working against me in consequence of the desperate protest which I had been compelled to make against the Jallianwallabagh atrocities in our own country, shortly before I had left India. If that was the case, it only supports the idea that your country lends herself too easily to all secret spells of insinuation, allowing its crowd psychology to be perpetually handled by clever manipulators.

Such constant churning up of the drifting froth on the surface mind of the nation, leaving its depths ignored, is certainly not the way to train it in truth and wisdom. It pained me when I realized the cheapening of the spiritual value of man in this country through his mind being ceaselessly exploited, in

a wholesale manner and with a scientific thoroughness, for the sake of profit and power. Having had this chance to come into personal contact with prosperous America, with the mentality that could produce quickly rotating crops of an enormous harvest of success, I grew afraid of it. The following extract from a letter which I wrote on this occasion to an English friend in India will give you some idea of how I felt:

> Everyday I seem to be growing afraid of the very vision of this success. It has been said in the Upanishad: *Happiness is greatness.* But ambition points to bigness and calls it greatness, and our track is hopelessly lost. When I look on the picture of Buddha, I cry out for the great peace of inner fulfilment. My longing grows painfully intense as my mind becomes distracted at the stupendous unmeaning of the monstrosity in the things around me. Every morning I sit by my window and say to myself: 'I must not bow my head to this ugly idol worshipped by the West with daily human sacrifice!' I remember that morning at Shelida, when the Vaishnava woman came to me and said: 'When are you coming down from your three-storied building, to meet your love under the shade of the trees?' Just now I am on the top storey of the sky-scraper, to which the tallest of trees dares not send its whisper; but love silently comes to me saying: 'When are you coming down to meet me on the green grass under the rustling leaves, where you have the freedom of the sky and of sunlight and the tender touch of life's simplicity?' I try to say something about money in reply, but it sounds so ludicrous and yet so tragic, that my words grow ashamed of themselves and they stop.

Let me conclude with another extract from a letter of the same period:

> When I finish reading your letters from Santiniketan, I wake up from my lyric dream to find myself at the bottom of a prodigious pile of newspaper prose. My surroundings seem to me like the inside of a whale that has swallowed me.
>
> The idea of freedom, which the people in this country have, is the imaginary freedom of a fly shut up in a glass case whose walls are invisible. They are surrounded by an impregnable globe of unreality to which they cling and believe that they are in solid possession of the sky. But I can assure you that you have the right to laugh at these buzzing creatures, with their absurd pride at having made their sky densely substantial. This deludes them with a freedom that is of the eye, while immuring them in a confinement that is of the spirit.
>
> My freedom is unreal, so long as I cherish slavery in my soul. This is a truism, like our idea of death; but opportunity comes when we discover it in our life, and then it discloses to us its ever newness of truth. I seem to pass through a real training for becoming a fakir when I am in this country. Buddha was born to regal surroundings which gave him the fitness to attain the true majesty of beggardom. I wrote a poem when I was in India: *I shall never be an ascetic.* But when I am here, the inspiration

comes to me, with a rush of lyrical fervour, to write a hymn to Shiva, the Lord of Ascetics, who has the four quarters of the sky for his mantle.

It may sound to you like a paradox when I say that what oppresses me most in this country is the utter lack of freedom with which the atmosphere is charged. But it is true. I long to draw in the breath of life, but my nostrils get stopped with sand and soot, and then I am choked into acknowledging the truth, that it is not substance which is most important for us, but the modest bareness of it.

Leisure and space are the most precious gifts for us; for we are creators. Our real freedom is in the world of our own creation where our mind can work unhindered and our soul finds its throne from which to govern its own dominion.

1927

THE PRINCIPLE OF LITERATURE

In the world of our fairy tales, the son of the Detective, the son of the Merchant and the son of the King set forth in the adventurous quest of the Princess: the Truth, represented by her, is approached from three sides by three different types of mind.

The process which one of them follows is, by analysis, to find in her the secrets of body and mind; but in this region of science, she is of no more value than any other girl,—there is no difference between Princess and scullery-maid. The Detective, be he scientist or philosopher, has nothing to do with feeling, no sense even of utility, all he has is the spirit of Question.

The Princess has another aspect, - that in which she is useful. She spins, weaves and embroiders. The eyes with which the Merchant's son observes her,—turning her spindle, wielding her shuttle, plying her needle,—have in their gaze neither feeling, nor questioning, but only calculation.

The King's son is not physiologist or psychologist, nor has he passed any examination in economics. What he has passed, methinks, is just his twenty-fourth year, and also the impassable heath of the fairy tales. He has crossed difficult paths, not for learning, nor for riches, but for the Princess herself, whose palace is not in the laboratory, nor in the market place, but in that heart's paradise of Eternal Spring where bloom the flowers in the poet's bower of phantasy.

That which is not known by logic, which defies definition, whose value is not in any practical use, but which can only be intimately felt, finds its expression in Literature, is the subject of Aesthetics. No man who has the gift of enjoyment ever nags or pokes any creation of Art with the questions: *Why art thou here? What art thou?*—He exclaims: *It is enough for me that thou art thyself!* This was what the King's son whispered in the ear of the Princess, and it was for the proper utterance of these very words that Shahjahan was compelled to build the Taj Mahal.

We can only define that which can be measured: that which is immeasurable, which eludes all attempts at capture, is not attainable by reason, but by immediate perception. The Upanishad says of the Infinite Being that we can reach Him not with speech nor with the mind, but by our consciousness of delight, wherewith all fear departs from us. Our soul has her hunger for this immediateness of realization, whereby she is enabled also to know herself. The love, the contemplation, the vision that alone can satisfy this hunger finds its place in Literature, in Art.

The space enclosed within walls has been appropriated by my business office, which there buys and sells, pays and charges rent, by the yard. Outside, where is the assembly of stars, undivided space is realized by me through my sense of joy in the boundless. This vastness is superfluous for the purpose of mere physical life, as is proved by the worms that burrow underground. There

are in this world also human worms for whom a dearth of sky is no privation; for in them has been killed the mind that cannot live without expanding its wings outside the prison bars of necessity. It was the tyranny of the ghosts of such dead souls that frightened the poet into the prayer:

Doom me not to the futility
Of offering things of joy to the callous!

But the heart of the King's son is fresh and sensitive. He realizes in the Princess that sweep of immensity which is in the sky lighted by the eternal stars; and his response to the sight of her is as befits such realization. The others behave differently. To measure the rhythm of the heart-throbs of the King's daughter, the scientist has no compunction in improvising a tube of tin. The Merchant finds his satisfaction in the tin can wherein he safe-keeps the cream churned by the Princess' own hand. But the King's son does not so much as dream of ordering tin armlets for the Princess,—should he perchance do so it would be for him a veritable nightmare. If, when he wakes, he happens to find gold scarce, he is forthwith impelled to sally forth in search of rose buds for her.

From this can be understood why, in Sanskrit, Rhetoric is called the Grammar of Ornament. Ornament is the symbol of the ultimate. The mother who finds the finality of her joy in her babe, translates this absolute consciousness of hers into the adornments wherewith she decks its body. We view our servant within fixed limits and our return for his service is like-wise limited to a fixed salary. But we view our friend in the unlimited, so ornaments blossom forth in our language and behaviour, in the tone of our voice, our smile, our welcome. In literature we speak of him with decorated words, of which the significance is not in their meaning, but in their feeling the message whereof is brought home by the ring of their melody. The appearances, the thoughts, the dreams which are not made manifest through reasoning,—these are of Literature.

What in English is called *real*, is in our language called *sārthaka* (significant). Common truth is one thing, significant truth quite another. Common truth does not admit of selection; it is the significant that is select. Men of every sort come under the head of common truth, the man of significance is hardly to be found in a million. When, on the impulse of his profound pity, Valmiki was stirred to metrical utterance, it was only with the aid of Rishi Narada that he could find a real man, of a significance worthy of his metre.

Not that significantly real things are rare, but anything that is not significant to me is not real for me. Because the world of reality has more extensive boundaries for the Poet and the Artist, they can bring out the significance of a much larger variety of things. For in Whatsoever we are made aware of some ideal of completeness, that becomes significant to us. A grain of sand is nothing to me, but a lotus flower has for me the full force of certitude. Though at every step the sand may obtrude itself on my attention,—grating on my feet, irritating my eye, setting my teeth on edge,—nevertheless it has not for me any fulness of truth. The lotus does not have to elbow its way

into my notice, rather does my mind of its own accord go out to greet and welcome it.

Let me give an example of the sensitive fastidiousness of the mind when choosing the adornments for the object of its adoration. The flower of the *sajinā* is not lacking in beauty, but the poets, when celebrating the enthronement of the King of Seasons, do not by any chance include its name in their songs of acclamation. It has lost prestige with the poets because it happens to figure as an article of diet. For the same reason the flowers of the brinjal or the pumpkin stand with lowered heads outside the gates of poesy,—the kitchen has destroyed their caste. Not alone the poets, but also their sweethearts disdain these flowers as ornaments, though a spray of the delicate *sajinā* flower-clusters in their dark tresses would assuredly not have been ill-becoming. Neither the *kunda* nor *tagar* are gorgeous or scented, yet for them the door to the realm of adornment remains open, for they have not been tainted with the touch of the hunger of the body.

Here pictorial art is at an advantage. The artist's brush need not shrink from painting the superb foliage of the yam, whereas to bring that name, suggestive of a meal, into the description of any verdant scene would tax all the resources of the poet's pen. The sounds of words, moreover, sometimes have undignified associations, by reason of the way they are used in our everyday life, which are liable to give offence in the case of the word picture, for it is not shape or colour, but sound which is of the essence of poetry. I am not usually credited with any squeamish regard for convention, yet have I often to resort to a less usual name, or a round-about phrase, rather than use a word that has a utilitarian significance. I should say here, however, that these considerations do not apply with equal force in the case of the Western poet with whom it is the substance and not the name that dominates.

Be that as it may, it is a common experience that we fail to see in its entirety that which subserves our use, for it is eclipsed by the shadow of our need. The kitchen and pantry are of everyday necessity to the householder but, these are the rooms he fain would keep out of public view. His reception room, which he for himself can do without, is the one on which he lavishes all furniture and adornment, striving to the best of his means, by carpeting it, hanging it with pictures, stocking it with objects of exotic beauty, to give it a touch of the universal; for he would be known to the larger world outside, through this room of his choice, in all the glory of his own personality. In the facts that he eats and stores up food his personality finds no ultimate significance. That he has a special distinction is the tidings which he seeks to communicate through his reception rooms,—wherefore they are decorated.

In the realm of Biology man and beast are not distinct; as there viewed, self-preservation and race preservation are of equal importance in the nature of both. But man's spirit fails to find in these features the true significance of Man. So, however deep-seated or widespread man's desire to dine may be, his literature has but scanty recognition of it. Man's eating propensity may be an insistent, but it is not a significant truth; that is why the satisfaction of his

hunger is not one of the joys that have found a place in the paradise of his Art-world.

The sexual relationship of man and woman stands on a higher plane than man's appetite for food, for it has achieved an intimate connection with the relationship of hearts. The sex instinct which, in a basic view of life, has only a secondary place, has risen, in the sex relations of the larger life of man, to a position transcending even the primary; for Love illumines man, within and without, into a supreme intensity of consciousness. That illumination is lacking in the primitive principle of race preservation, which therefore assumes importance only on the plane of science. The union of hearts, as seen by us, is abstracted from the primitive needs of Nature into the glory of its own finality. And hence it has come to occupy so vast a place in Literature and the Arts.

The supreme significance of the union of the sexes is, for man, not in procreation,—*prajanārtham* (for the sake of progeny) as our Lawgiver would have it,—for in that he is merely animal, but in love wherein he is truly man. I do not use the word *animal* with any implication of ethical judgment, but from the view-point of the progressive self-realization of man. Owing to their intimately close contact a natural spirit of rivalry prevails between the animal and the spiritual spheres of man's sex-life in their respective claims for the wreath of victory from art and literature. The psycho-analyst has introduced a further complication by asseverating that the animal sex-instinct is also a deep and potent factor in the mental life of man. But whatever practical utility or intellectual value this dictum of science may have, it can have no place in the realm of Literature and Art, which is concerned with the valuation of man's feeling of delight according to his standard of the eternal. The same is the case with considerations of social morality. The problems that have arisen with regard to the place of the sex-relation in Literature cannot be solved from the scientific or moral standpoint, but from that of Aesthetics, which alone can determine which of its two aspects man will adorn and raise on the pedestal of immortality.

We find in every age temporary extraneous circumstances occasionally creating obsessions that penetrate into the field of literature and overshadow for the time its true characteristics. It is not possible, however, for these temporary excitements to find any permanent place in literature, for, being volatile by nature, they soon evaporate. During the great European War, for instance, the war turbulence muddied even the streams of its poetry. When in England the Puritanic age was followed by one of license, its exhalations befogged the radiance of its literature, but even while such period lasted, the presence of this cloud testified not to its own significance, but to that of the light which it could not wholly obscure. In the Middle Ages of Europe the Church attained such power that it tried to throttle science, forgetting that, in its own sphere, science is supreme and owes no allegiance even to religion. Now the opposite phenomenon is at work, and it is science that seeks to establish its sway over every region of man's being: in the pride of its new

prestige it has ceased to have misgivings about encroaching beyond its scope.

Science is impersonal. Its very essence is an impartial curiosity about truth. And yet the all-pervading net of this curiosity is gradually enmeshing modern literature within its folds; though of Literature, on the contrary, the essence is its partiality,—its supreme message is the freedom of choice according to the taste of man. It is this freedom which is being assailed by the invasion of science. The sensualism of which European literature is full to-day owes its origin to this *curiosity*, as its prototype in the Age of the Restoration had its impulse in *lust*. But just as the lust of that age failed to win the laurel which could secure it a permanent place in the Olympus of Literature, neither can the scientific curiosity of this age maintain its keenness for ever.

There was a day in our country when a heat wave of licentiousness passed over our society and stimulated our literature into an outburst of carnalism. It was a temporary aberration of which the modern reader refuses to take any serious notice, not by way of moral censure, but because he has ceased to accord it permanent value.

Of late, it is true, we notice the opposite tendency in some of our modern critics who would rank among the eternal verities the intemperance of the flesh that has been imported into our literature from the Western world. But they forget that the eternal cannot wholly contradict the past. The natural delicacy which has always been a feature of man's aesthetic enjoyment, the aristocracy which has always reigned in the realm of art,—these are eternal. It is only in the rantings of the science-intoxicated democracy of to-day that this modesty, this reticence, is dubbed a weakness, and a rude manifestation of physical hunger is proclaimed to constitute the virility of art.

I have seen an example of this begrimed pugilistic modernism in the form that our *Holi* play has taken amongst the roughs of Chitpore Road. There is no scattering of red powder, no spraying with rose-coloured perfumes, no laughter, no song. Rolling long pieces of wet cloth in the street mud and therewith bespattering one another and the unfortunate passers-by, to the accompaniment of unearthly yells, is the mad form which this old-time Spring Festival has here assumed. Not to tinge but to taint is the object. I do not say that such propensity is foreign to the mentality of man: the psycho-analyst is therefore welcome to revel in a study thereof. My objection to the importation of this common desire to soil into a festival inspired by man's aesthetic sense is not because it is not true, but because it is not appropriate.

Some of those who seek to defend the bringing in of such muddy carousals into the region of our literary enjoyment do so with the question—*But is it not true?* That question, as I say, does not arise. When our drug-befuddled *Bhojpuri* festive party storm the welkin with the unending clang of their intoxicated drums and cymbals, their demonaic shouts of an eternal repetition of the one line of their tuneless song, it is entirely beside the point to ask the suffering neighbours whether or not it is true; the only relevant question can be: *How is it music?* There is admittedly a kind of self-forgetful joy in inebriation; there is undoubtedly great forcefulness in an unrestrained

exercise of lung power; and if the ugliness of incivility has to be taken as a sign of virility, then we must needs admire this athletic intoxication also. But what then? This forcefulness still remains of the slums of Chitpore, it cannot aspire to the Elysium of Art.

In conclusion it should be added that, if in the countries ridden by science, an indiscriminate curiosity should, Duhsāsana-like, seek to strip the goddess of Literature of her drapery, they have at least the excuse of science to offer for such conduct. But in our country, where neither within nor without, neither in thought nor in action, has science been permitted an entry, what excuse can serve to cover up the insolence of the spurious, borrowed immodesty that has come to infest its literature? If the question be sent to the other side of the seas: *Why this turmoil of the market-crowd in your literature?* The answer will come: *That is no fault of our literature; the cause lies in the markets that surround us.* When that same question is put on this side, the reply will be: *True, markets we have none; but the noisomeness of the market-place is all there; that is just the glory of our modernism!*

1927

THE FUNCTION OF A LIBRARY

MOST LIBRARIES ARE possessed with the passion for accumulation. Three-quarters of their books do not come into use,—their overgrown proportion even thrusts into a corner the specially selected few that are meant for being actually used. In our popular parlance, the man of large riches is called a great man. When a millionaire comes into a gathering, they vie to do him honour,—an honour not dependent on what he has to give, but merely on what he has. Much in the same way, the bigness of a library is estimated by the number of its volumes. The facilities offered for their use that should have been its glory, are not deemed necessary for its pride.

The words that are owned by our language have two different repositories,—one is the dictionary, the other is its literature. It is useful to collect all the known words in a comprehensive dictionary, though comparatively but few of them are actually current. On the other hand the range of words found in literature,—which are living and therefore not one of which can be spared,—is ever so much less. And yet it has to be admitted that the value of literature is more than that of the dictionary.

The same truth applies to the library. That part of its contents which is for the purpose of extensive accumulation has its usefulness, but the other part which is for constant and multifarious use, gives it its significance. The average librarian, however, rarely takes thought or trouble to bring the largest number of books to the utmost use, because it is always easier to overwhelm the public mind with the mere display of quantitative abundance.

In order to bring a library into the fullest use, it is necessary that its contents should be clearly and specifically brought to notice, otherwise it is difficult for the ordinary man to find his way about them, and the library is left as a city of vast accommodation that lacks sufficient means of communication. Those who frequent libraries on some special quest of their own, may manage to make a track for themselves by dint of the urgency of their particular pursuit. But the library itself should recognize its share of responsibility in the matter. Because it has the books, it is incumbent on the library to get them read, for then alone is it justified. It is not enough that it passively permits visitors: its invitation should be active. For, as the Sanskrit proverb tells us: *tannashtam yannadīyaté*, that which is not given is wasted.

The usual thing is for a library to say: *Here is my catalogue, come and select for yourself.* But in the usual catalogue there is no introduction, no invitation, no spirit of welcome. That library alone can be called hospitable, which shows an eagerness to invite readers to the feast at its disposal,—it is such hospitality that makes a library big, not its size. That the readers make the library, is not the whole truth; the library likewise makes the readers.

If this truth is kept in view, we at once realize what a great function is that of the librarian. His duty does not end with the acquisition, classification and

care-taking of the volumes in his charge; in other words, it is not exhausted by mere multiplication and division; he must have a proper understanding of his books as well. If a library is too big, it becomes practically impossible for the librarian adequately to acquire such true understanding. That is why I feel that the big library can but function as a store-house, and only the small one serve as a refectory to furnish the wherewithal for daily sustenance and enjoyment.

My idea of a small library is one that keeps books on every subject, but only select books, not one of which is there merely as an offering of worship to Number, but each one of which stands on its own merits; where the librarian is a true devotee, devoid of ulterior seeking, free from pride in the mere loading of shelves, capable of discriminate rejection. A library, in short, which makes just enough provision that can be placed before its guests for their delectation, with a librarian who has the qualities of a host, not a store-keeper.

Consider, for instance, the case of a library which takes in a number of periodicals, published at home and abroad. If some one on the staff made it his duty regularly to compile a list of the specially interesting articles, and hang it up in a conspicuous place, would that not immensely increase the chances of their being read? As it is, three-fourths of these remain unopened, encumbering space and burdening the shelves as they keep on accumulating. The same is the case with new books. Very few librarians attempt to acquaint themselves, much less their constituents, with the contents. Yet is it not obvious that the wealth they have to offer should be made known as soon as new books come to hand?

Made known to whom? In each case to a special circle of readers. Every library should have as its indispensable limbs such special circles of readers. These alone can give it life. The worth of a librarian I would gauge by his power of attracting and looking after such circles, of acting as the intermediary for an intimacy of relationship between reader and library. That is to say, on him is cast the burden not only of the books, but of their readers as well, and in the maintaining of both is the test of his efficiency, of the proper discharge of his trust.

Even as to the books themselves, the librarian's duty should not be confined to those that he can collect in his own library, but he must also keep himself acquainted with all those others that are published from time to time, subject by subject. For the purposes of our school at Santiniketan, for example, we have to keep ourselves in touch with all the publications intended for children, so as to be able to make our selection. Every library should assist in work of this kind. This they could do by keeping up-to-date lists of books on the different subjects, as they come out and gain reputation. If it became known that a particular library was endeavouring to discharge this duty, I am sure that the publishers would be glad to co-operate by furnishing it with lists of their publications, together with a résumé of their contents.

In conclusion it is my submission to the All India Library Conference that it should consider the question of preparing and circulating such quarterly, half-yearly or at least annual list, from which the main features of the best new

books in the English language,—scientific, literary and historical,—may be gathered. If it be the object of this Conference to stimulate the founding and growth of libraries all over the country, then such object can be best promoted by thus affording a guide to the books that should be procured; incidentally also thereby assisting the libraries in what should be their main work—not the mere procuring and keeping of books, but actively acquainting their constituents with and interesting them in their contents.

1929

ON ORIENTAL CULTURE AND JAPAN'S MISSION

SOME YEARS AGO I had the real meeting with Japan when a great original mind, from these shores came in our midst. He was our guest for a long time and he had immense inspiration for the young generation of Bengal in those days which immediately preceded a period of a sudden ebullition of national self-assertion in our country. The voice of the East came from him to our young men. That was a significant fact, a memorable one in my own life. And he asked them to make it their mission in life to give some great expression of the human spirit worthy of the East. It is the responsibility which every nation has, to reveal itself before the world. Obscurity should be considered almost as a national crime, it is worse than death and is never forgiven by the history of man. The people must bring out the best in them which belongs to the magnanimity of their soul which is their wealth that exceeds their immediate and exclusive needs and recognizes its responsibility to send cultural and spiritual invitation to the rest of the world. He asked our young men to cherish in their heart a strong faith and a deep pride in their past where they enshrine the vision of the noblest ideals of heroism; of devotion to truth and freedom, devotion to the eternal laws of righteousness. And this, not as a critical scholar, laboriously picking up evidences of actual facts, but as a devotee lovingly conscious of the ideals incarnated in ancient legends, in epics, in mythological creations. He said that if they could maintain a simple attitude of worshipful mind towards a great eternal idea which is the East, they would be able to summon up the strength to suffer martyrdom in their aspiration for a glorious future. He mentioned, as an instance of this truth, the writings of great history of Japan in which has been treasured the inspiration of the best ideals of this country for the coming generations of her children, not a critical history of facts but of truth which is deep in the memory of the people. My friend, of whom I have spoken, was a true Japanese and I am sure that because of this abundant truth in him, he could deeply understand the other Eastern peoples. And a great opportunity it was for us to see with what natural ease he could share the life of our own people, and inspire in their heart an aspiration, not only for the good of their own country but for all humanity. He was one of those who had the gift of sympathetic insight which could discover some abiding human truth from all obscure corners, and detect significant meanings from the most insignificant facts, which are often overlooked. And it was this gift through which he had helped our young generation to know better their own land, to discover the treasure of culture which lies hidden in the national mind of the people, and they had wonderful days of ecstasy and enthusiasm so long as he was in our midst. With an eager love he identified himself with the young men of those days, and they still remember him. The movements to which he gave impetus are still working in our province, and one of those was the art movement in Bengal, which he had helped with his

sympathy, understanding, and imagination, his instinct and experience about principle of art. Those young men who sat near him and listened to his words, day after day, are still reaping the benefit of that fruitful opportunity in the morning of their youth. Well, that was a very real meeting which happened in our country—meeting with Japan. And I assure you, my friends, that this meeting had the effect of drawing the heart of our people in Bengal towards your country more than any other fact that has happened since then, or before that time. It was that personal relationship, personal influence, in which he represented the best of Japan. I say best, because it transcended all local and temporary interests of Japan in its love and sympathy; and he worked, worked day and night, among a people whose language he hardly understood, and this very fact was an education for us. I remember when I used to accompany him to some of our village fairs and other places outside the town, what subtle sensitiveness he displayed for things that had some permanent value which was not evident to those who were familiar with them. He would often buy some very cheap things, like simple clay oil-pots that peasants use, with ecstasy of admiration, some things in which we had failed to realize the instinct for beauty which those unsophisticated villagers possessed without their knowing its merit. And then, after over six months in India, he left our country, but his experience, the sentiment which was evoked in his mind, he has given expression to in a very remarkable book, full of suggestive beauty of expression, a part of which is named, 'Ideals of the East'. Then I had the privilege of meeting him once against in America, in Boston, when he was the Curator of the Boston Museum, Oriental Department, and I found what profound admiration he inspired among those cultured Americans of Boston who came into contact with him. On this occasion of our last meeting, he was almost mortally ill and intending to come back to his native soil. He asked me to visit China, promised that he would take me over that country himself personally and show me the real China, which is not quite evident to the shallow curiosity of the ordinary tourist mind. He expressed very profound respect for China. That also revealed his great personality to me. His deep sympathy for India did touch us very greatly, but then I found that it was nothing which was special in its limit; it was only one of the manifestations of his understanding mind, his generous human sympathy. It enhanced my respect for him to know that he had almost a feeling of reverence for the neighbouring country of his, for which very often your people have not their full measure of sympathy and appreciation. He was far above those local and petty prejudices which blind our vision to all that is great in races to which we do not belong ourselves. According to him, China was a great country with endless possibilities; that the genius which her past history revealed, leaving its innumerable memorials scattered everywhere in that land, still lived in the heart of the people. It was his wish that I should know and acknowledge this; and that was another good help which he rendered me. It at once strengthened my interest for the ancient land, my faith in her future, because I could trust him when he expressed his admiration for those people who are to-day living in compara-

tive obscurity, whose lamps of culture are not completely lit up, but who were, according to him, waiting for another opportunity to have the fullness of illumination, shedding fresh glory upon the history of Asia. When I first met him I neither knew Japan nor had I any experience of China. I came to know both of these countries from the personal relationship with this great man whom I had the good fortune to meet and accept as one of my intimate friends. He was followed by three of your most renowned artists, one of whom is still living and I am sure has a universal reputation among his own countrymen, Yokoyama Taikwan; and another young artist, who I believe is no longer living, Hishida, and also another of them. And they worked there, they lived with our students, who were struggling to help their own instincts, find their aspiration from their own traditions and surroundings. Your artists from Japan were intimate with these young spirits of great promise and the memorial of that co-operation is still alive in the modern art movement started in Bengal. I am glad to confess to you at this meeting, that one of the influences which acted towards the awakening of spirit in Bengal flowed from the heart of that great man, Okakura, and I am specially grateful that through this, one of the most fruitful periods of our modern history had its association with Japan. And if this association of culture and sympathy is allowed to grow, then some day will be developed, not merely national culture, national minds, but a continental mind of Asia, greatly needed and long waiting to be revealed.

My friends, you all know what a great force it is in Europe that these Western peoples have such a thing as the continental concert of minds. It is a very real power, this cultural co-operation and bond of intellectual fellowship. It is a very great fact in human history. All the several countries of that continent contribute to a common coffer their individual wealth of mind, and intellectual treasure has been accumulating for centuries in the West. The important fact, which we have to keep in mind, is that they do not all have one language. There was a time in the Middle Age when Latin was the common language of culture but that was not the most glorious period of European civilization. There is no doubt that this classical language was the seed plot in which all the scholars of Europe had done their part of sowing the seeds. But then, when the shoots came up, the transplantation had to be done in different soils of languages that were living, and that was the great opportunity that Europe has had. And now, though the different European countries have different languages and also to some extent, different temperaments, different kinds of gifts, still they have this marvellous illumination of a combined culture which now dominates the whole of the world because of a great power that has been generated with this intellectual and spiritual co-operation of minds. I believe that such good fortune has never occurred to any other continent, never such a great truth of humanity revealed. It proved that when human minds with their respective capacities work together, a very great potent power is generated that has in it immortal life; and this is the highest lesson which we can accept from European civilization. When we talk about European civilization, we use a term which is real in its meaning, it is an

undoubted fact. But when they glibly talk of the Oriental mind and culture, they do not realize that we have not yet been able to develop a universal mind, a great background of Oriental cultures. Our cultures are too scattered. They yet have not any possibility of interconnection, and owing to that, they have their provincialism, something which is peculiar to each people with their idiosyncrasy and mannerism that generally has the character of stammering in them.

Peculiarity is not a thing of which we can be proud. Uniqueness of the individuals is great because that uniqueness has in it the essential element of universality. What is peculiar is accidental, is narrow in its range of expression, is exclusive and therefore it does not give us a permanent strength of truth. There are certain qualities in your civilization, the gifts which Japan has, that are unique. They are most admirable, not because they are peculiar to Japan, but because, in their uniqueness, they carry a universal aspect which can be gladly accepted and proudly owned by other people also, if they have the opportunity and wisdom to do so. For instance, it should give us real delight when we find some perfect artistic expression in your soil, finding its way to India and to Europe. It is a narrow mind, void of light, that can not feel the pride of it, pride for all humanity, to be able to know that these things of eternal value have been produced in the history of man. And we can meet on this ground of culture, which, though unique in each individual race, has its inexhaustible human appeal. Japan has offered her invitation to all time and to all parts of the world in whatever is of immortal value in her work of self-expression in her art, in her traditions that express some sensitive qualities of heart, her courtesy and power of self-control, great dignity of behaviour, which I have daily had the opportunity to admire, and I have deeply wished that our people also could receive inspiration from them without feeling the least sense of humiliation. Men are great borrowers, for when we borrow things of lasting merit from other people, we can claim our birthright to possess them. All real great things belong to all countries, and men of great genius cannot be confined in a classification in any one particular race or country. Such great geniuses have been born in all parts of the world spreading the brotherhood of man. These great hearts, who are like mountain peaks overtowering in their altitude, rise far above the soil that supports them and from that height, which is in the heart of the eternal, they can scan the distant horizons and realize the fundamental unity in all differences around them. You have, I am sure, such great minds in your country, who have their feet on the soil of this land and their minds in the sky—the universal realm of visions—the visions which rise from great souls from all parts of the world and hover and mingle in a translucent atmosphere. I have had the great good fortune to know such individuals in the West and in the East, who have their pride in humanity, who radiate influences round them which are for saving human races from race jealousy and dark suspicions bred of irrational prejudices. Our need is all the greater, in these dark days of dissensions, of cults of lies, for messages from the height that rise above the dust and the mist

of the baser passions of man, the voice from the calm of truth, the truth of human unity and the hope of a dawn, when with the advent of light we shall be able to recognize in the faces of each other, the friend, the kindred. My friends, I feel certain that those of you who are listening to me today, know and have met such individuals among yourselves. It may be that they still live in obscurity; it may be that their names will never appear in history, but they are always disseminating light around them and are silently building up the salvation of man. I appeal to you who belong to Japan, who have shown indomitable courage and fortitude in the modern struggle of race, accepted the responsibility of the present age of progress and have taken your honoured place in the comity of nations, I appeal to you, be not content with the exclusive possession of what you have received from the hands of fortune. This is a time for you to be generous in your hospitality, the merit of which virtue is acknowledged by all peoples of the East. Hospitality to distant races should be an expression of patriotism for one's own country. Whenever I come to Japan, I realize this in her atmosphere not only in evident acts and words but in all subtle shades of expression, in all your things of beauty. We that come from outside accept this call with gratitude. And at the same time, I must confess that because I feel almost a personal pride in this building up of your modern history, pride as an Asiatic, therefore, I often feel misgivings at any thing that casts dark shadow upon the course of your progress. I have sometime suffered the pain of such doubts; haven't I seen in the West manifestations of the national pride which gloats on the humiliation of its neighbours and fellow-beings without knowing that such humiliation comes back to itself? I have seen in the West the immense, monstrous pride in some glory that they exclusively claim and want to preserve for their own nation. Unfortunately in the wake of some other evils these germs from the diseased hearts of the nation have come to us floating from the West and our treatment of alien races in the East is beginning to show signs of that supercilious contempt and want of consideration which in the West is justified in the name of patriotism.

A great problem has come to you, my friends of Japan. Now you have something you never had in your history, you have a dependency. You have also a neighbouring nation which is not equal to you in its strength of arms. And you have to deal with these races, these neighbours to whom it is so dangerously easy for you to be unjust with impunity. May I be frank with you and say that when I chance to hear of some instances of ill-treatment to Koreans and to others who are less fortunate than yourselves, it hurts me very deeply causing keen disappointment? I have ever wished that Japan, in behalf of all Eastern peoples, will reveal an aspect of civilization which is generally ignored in other parts of the world. It should be greatly rich in the wealth of human relationship, even in its politics. The generosity in human relationship I claim as something special to the East. We do acknowledge our human responsibilities to our neighbours, to our dependents, to all those who are related to us and this personal element in our civilization is something which

we cannot afford to lose. Science is impersonal, and scientific diplomacy and scientific organizations of all kinds are developing this aspect of impersonal dealings with human beings which, even if not always painful, is always humiliating. Certainly it is owing to this that industrial class-wars are now being waged everywhere. The conflict between man and woman, between master and dependent, between neighbours, has become uncontrollable because the bonds of human relationship have snapped or become loose. Everything is ordered with a precision which is perfect, but mechanically perfect, which has callously divested itself of all elements of human sentiment, ignored all injunctions of the codes of honour that ever refused meanly to cling to calculating utility. More than once I have had opportunities to talk to the Koreans who brought their problems to me. I explained to them my views and said that with the changed conditions in the present age no small countries can expect protection in their geographical barriers solely through their own small resources and imperfect training and education. And such helplessness has rendered all the weak spots of the human world danger centres of political storms, like areas of rarified air inevitably inviting a heavier host of wind to a turbulent rush of cyclone. No great nation, for the sake of self-preservation, can allow such weak spots in its neighbourhood to remain out of its control, for that is sure to afford vantage ground to its enemies and neither is it safe for the weaker people themselves to be left alone. And therefore the problem before the Koreans is to cultivate the moral strength which will enable them to establish a mutual relationship honourable for both sides. The moral danger is no less great for the people who unfortunately have the evil opportunity of exercising absolute power upon a weaker race. And for the sake of keeping up a high standard of national character which, after all, is the only source of permanent strength for the people it is imperatively necessary for the ruling nation to allow the subject race to find in themselves enough strength to be able to remind their rulers that they have to be just, honest, sympathetic and respectful. It is meet for the victors to maintain the pride of their righteousness by allowing rights to those who cannot forcibly wrench it away from them and those who, as human beings, have their inalienable claim upon human sympathy. You can establish your lasting kingdom if you can help your subjects to greatness and to self-government by training them up into self-confidence and bringing out into light all their latent power of self-expression. You must know that the day comes when the defeated have their chance for revenge; that peoples have long memories and wrongs rankle deep in their heart; times of trouble are sure to come to all nations when the weak can bring fatal disaster to the stronger. The warnings of providence are often silent, and politicians do not heed to them. They have not the far-sighted vision; they live in the dusky den of the immediate present. And therefore I appeal to you as representatives of your people, win their love whom you can be foolish enough to bully into a sullen subjection, make them trustworthy by trusting them and by respecting them, train them into self-respect which is for your own good. Let the best mission of statesmanship be carried on in an atmosphere of

sympathy and understanding, in the grateful heart of a people the best of all backgrounds for the creation of the national genius. And before I leave, let me hope that I have not hurt the susceptibility of my audience when, in a genuine spirit of sympathy, I have offered them my message, thereby offering the best homage that I can render them.

1929

IDEALS OF EDUCATION

THE GREATEST MAN of modern India, Raja Rammohan Roy was born in Bengal and was the best friend of my grandfather. He had courage to overcome the prohibition against sea-voyage which we had in our country at the time; and he crossed the sea, and came into touch with the great western minds.

My father was fortunate in coming under the influence of Rammohan Roy from his early years which helped him to free himself from the sectarian barriers, from traditions of worldly and social ideas that were very rigid, in many aspects very narrow and not altogether beneficial. My father drew from our ancient scriptures, from the *Upanishads*, truths which had universal significance, and not anything that were exclusive to any particular age or any particular people. We were ostracized by society and this liberated us from the responsibility of conforming to all those conventions that had not the value of truth, that were mere irrational habits bred in the inertia of the racial mind. In my boyhood's dreams I claimed such freedom that we had tasted, for all humanity.

Nations are kept apart not merely by international jealousy but also by their own past, handicapped by the burden of the dead and decaying, the breeding ground of diseases that attack the spiritual man. I could not believe that generations of peoples, century after century, must have their birth chamber in a moral and intellectual coffin which has its restricted space regulation for a body that has lost its movements. Civilization has its inevitable tendency to accumulate dead materials and to make elaborate adjustments for their accommodation, leaving less and less room for life with its claim to grow in freedom. There are signs of that in India, and I know to-day that it is more or less true in all races, for our mind has its inclination to grow lazy as it grows old and to shirk its duty to make changes in the rhythm of the changing times. In the very heart of this rigid rule of the dead, I was brought up in an atmosphere of aspiration, aspiration for the expansion of the human spirit. We in our home sought freedom of power in our language, freedom of imagination in our literature, freedom of soul in our religious creeds and that of mind in our social environment. Such an opportunity has given me confidence in the power of education which is one with life and only which can give us real freedom, the highest that is claimed for man, his freedom of moral communion in the human world. The ghosts of ideals which no longer have a living reality have become the obsession of all nations that carry an overwhelming past behind them perpetually overshadowing their future.

The reign of the ghost has strewn the path of our history lessons with mischief, with prejudices that ever obstruct the mutual understanding of nations, that helps in the cultivation of the thorny crop of national vanity and unscrupulousness in international relationship. From our young days our minds are deliberately trained with the aid of untrue words and unholy symbolism in the name of patriotism, to a collective moral attitude, which we condemn in individuals.

Persons who have no faith in human nature are apt to think that such conditions are eternal in man—that the moral ideals are only for individuals but the race belongs to that primitive nature which is for the animal. And according to them, in the racial life, it is necessary that the animal should have its full scope of training in the cult of suspicion, jealousy, fierce destructiveness, cruel rapacity. They contemptuously brand optimism as sentimental weakness, and yet in spite of that virulent scepticism an enormous change has worked itself out in course of the growth of civilization from the darkest abyss of savagery. I refuse to believe that human society has reached its limit of moral possibility. And we must work all our strength for the seemingly impossible, and must believe that there is a constant urging in the depth of human soul for the attainment of the perfect, the urging which secretly helps us in all our endeavour for the good. This faith has been my only asset in the educational mission which I have made my life's work, and almost unaided and alone, I struggle along my path. I try to assert in my words and works that education has its only meaning and object in freedom—freedom from ignorance about the laws of universe, and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world. In my institution I have attempted to create an atmosphere of naturalness in our relationship with strangers, and the spirit of hospitality which is the first virtue in men that made civilization possible.

I invited thinkers and scholars from foreign lands to let our boys know how easy it is to realize our common fellowship, when we deal with those who are great, and that it is the puny who with their petty vanities set up barriers between man and man.

I am glad that I have the opportunity to-day of letting my friends in Japan know something of my life-long cause and to assure them that it is not special to India but it will ever wait for acceptance by other races.

We in India are unfortunate in not having the chance to give expression to the best in us in creating intimate relations with the powerful peoples of the world. The bond between the nations to-day is made of the links of mutual menace, its strength depending upon the force of panic, and leading to an enormous waste of resources in a competition of browbeating and bluff. Some great voice is waiting to be heard which will usher in the sacred light of truth in the dark region of the nightmare of politics. But we in India have not yet had the chance. Yet we have our own human voice which truth demands. Even in the region where we are not invited to act we have our right to judge and to guide the mind of man to a proper point of view, to the vision of ideality in the heart of the real.

The activity represented in human education is a worldwide one, it is a great movement of universal co-operation inter-linked by different ages and countries. And India, though defeated in her political destiny, has her responsibility to hold up the cause of truth, even to cry in the wilderness, and offer her lessons to the world in the best gifts which she could produce. The messengers of truth have ever joined their hands across centuries, across the

seas, across historical barriers, and they help to form the great continent of human brotherhood. Education in all its different forms and channels has its ultimate purpose in the evolving of a luminous sphere of human mind from the nebula that has been rushing round ages to find in itself an eternal centre of unity. We individuals, however small may be our power and whatever corner of the world we may belong to, have the claim upon us to add to the light of the consciousness that comprehends all humanity. And for this cause I ask your co-operation, not merely because co-operation gives us strength in our work but because co-operation itself is the best aspect of the truth we represent, it is an end and not merely the means.

My friends, you are new converts to western ideals, in other words, the ideals belonging to the scientific view of life and the world. This is great and it is foolish to belittle its importance by wrongly describing it as materialism. For truth is spiritual in itself, and truly materialistic is the mind of the animal which is unscientific and therefore unable to cross the dark screen of appearance, of accidents, and reach the deeper region of universal laws. Science means intellectual probity in our dealings with the material world. This conscientiousness of mind is spiritual, for it never judges its results from the standard of external profits. But in science the oft-used half truth that honesty is the best policy has proved itself to be completely true. Science being mind's honesty in its relation to the physical universe never fails to bring us the best profit for our living. And mischief finds its entry through this backdoor of utility, and Satan has had his ample chance of making use of the divine fruit of knowledge for bringing shame upon humanity. Science as the best policy is tempting the primitive in man bringing out his evil passions through the respectable cover that it has supplied him. And this is why it is all the more needed to-day that we should have faith in ideals that have matured in the spiritual field through ages of human endeavour after perfection, the golden crops that have developed in different forms and in different soils but whose food value for man's spirit has the same composition. These are not for the local markets but for the universal hospitality, for sharing life's treasure with each other and realizing that human civilization is a spiritual feast the invitation to which is open to all, it is never for the ravenous orgies of carnage where the food and the feeders are being torn to pieces.

The legends of nearly all human races carry man's faith in a golden age which appeared as the introductory chapter in human civilization. It shows that man has his instinctive belief in the objectivity of spiritual ideals though this cannot be proved. It seems to him that they have already been given to him and that this gift has to be proved through his history against obstacles. The idea of millennium so often laughed at by the clever is treasured as the best asset by man in his mythology as complete truth realized for ever in some ageless time. Admitting that it is not a scientifical fact we must at the same time know that the instinct cradled and nourished in these primitive stories has its eternal meaning. It is like the instinct of a chick which dimly feels that an infinite world of freedom is already given to it, that it is not a subjective dream

but an objective reality, even truer than its life within the egg. If a chick has a rationalistic tendency of mind it ought not to believe in a freedom which is difficult to imagine and contradictory to all its experience, but all the same it cannot help pecking at its shell and ever accepting it as ultimate. The human soul confined in its limitation has also dreamt of a millennium and striven for an emancipation which seems impossible of attainment, and it felt its reverence for some great source of inspiration in which all its experience of the true, good and beautiful finds its reality though it cannot be proved, the reality in which our aspiration for freedom in truth, freedom in love, freedom in the unity of man is ideally realized for ever.

1929

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LEISURE

In my country, the cultivation of leisure has been a vital necessity. We may have many other compulsions for work, but hardly one for generating extra heat within our own physical constitution in order to maintain the balance between the outer temperature and the temperature of our body. In consequence, with us, restless activity has not become a pleasure in itself, and our bodily providence has slowed down our physical movements almost below the degree needful for the strenuous purposes of material prosperity.

We should bitterly blame our fate for an utter bankruptcy of civilization, if this strict economy of life were an absolute miserliness which gives up all prospect of profit to avoid the least risk of loss. Forest land is great, crowded with a furiously competing life; but the seemingly empty prairie land has also its own magnanimity, passively waiting to be wooed, yielding exhaustible wealth which has in it the spirit of co-operation, the deeper strength of meekness. The human world also has its prairie land of fertile leisure and forest land of self-assertive life.

Man has his two phases, the one in which he tries to make indefinite additions to the powers of his senses and limbs from the store-house of cosmic powers; and the other in which he tries to realize through various stages, his oneness with humanity and thus manifest in himself a truth which reveals him much more intimately than the fact of any extension of power.

Man, along with the animal, is born to this earth where he has the materials of his living; and according to the development of his energy and intelligence which helps him in the acquisition and use of these materials, he becomes powerful and wins in the race of life. In this race, the individual competition for success is the main motive force which man has in common with the animal.

This domain of material progress has for its object success which depends upon quickness in time and bigness in quantity for its achievement.

But man, unlike the animal, is born also to his home, his society and his country. These afford him the background, the perspective needed for the expression of his complete being. They belong to the domain of his civilization which urges slow centuries to develop creative ideals through co-operation of minds and endeavours, through magnificent hospitality and love's utmost sacrifice.

This is the realm of great leisure in whose bosom appear the revelations of human spirit which work themselves out from the obscure period of the nebula into the constellation of stars.

The complete human truth is comprehended in the mastery of law that gives power and the realization of harmony which gives perfection, just as in a work of art, the handling of technique and the inspiration of vision are both necessary. Occasionally men lose the sensitiveness of their mind through the

rude abrasions of constantly hurried moments. In such a state they become capable only of being aroused by some tortured trick in the technique, by some jerky shock of novelty which is not originality, by even ugliness that coarsely violates our sense of rhythm. These people take pride in proclaiming their disillusionment, after having taken to pieces things that can only have meaning in their wholeness. In this callous world of theirs, Titans have their victory and Gods are defeated. And have we the time to ask ourselves if some of the sights, that overpower us to-day with awe, are not the triumphal towers of the Titans, built with the ruins of our paradise?

The spirit of progress is neither moral nor immoral. With equal indifference it uses its efficiency in inflicting as well as in healing wounds, at the same time, in helping us in a perfect system of robbery and in a perfect organization of charity for those who suffer in consequence. It achieves success through intelligent dealings with Nature's potentialities.

This realm of progress is described in the Upanishads as *Anna Brahma*—the infinite in its aspect of utility. It has its urge in man for realizing the immeasurable in the domain of quantity through an endlessly progressing process of measurement. Directly we lose our faith in it through lethargy or diffidence, we lapse into an animal state in this material universe, and fall passively under the law of natural selection.

The rule of natural selection finds its full sway in a close system of life with rigidly limited resources and restricted possibilities. Man broke the prison wall open, declared his sovereignty and refused to be contented with the small allowance originally allotted to him by Nature, just enough to enable him to carry on a perpetual repetition of a narrow programme of life. He mastered his resources and utilises them for his own indomitable purpose. This working out of one's own purpose through the manipulation of Nature's law is great. It carries in it the proclamation of the right to freedom of the human spirit which refuses to acknowledge limits to its power in the very face of powerful contradictions. The present age is resounding with the declaration of independence for man in the world of nature. This independence is not absolute, but it is a sailing upon a perpetually widening current of emancipation. So long as the movement is maintained, it gives us the taste of the infinite at every point, but directly we stop, we become the captive of the finite and lose the dignity of our soul. There are races of men who have allowed themselves to be stranded upon the sterile sand of their past achievement, like a whale on the seashore, and they remain, to the end of their days, the prey of ravenous evils from all sides. There is a spirit of immortality in the sphere of the material existence which consists in a triumphant movement of realization. It loses its inspiration and becomes a menace to man when we are meanly overcome by the profit it promises and ignore its great meaning—the expansion of power which gives us the divine right to transform this world into a world for Man.

Truth has its other aspect which is described by the Upanishad as *Vigñāna Brahma* or *Ananda Brahma*, the infinite in its aspect of comprehension, aspect of joy. It is the realm of wisdom and love where mere dimension, number and

speed have no meaning, where the value of truth is realized by matured mind through patient devotion, self-control and concentration of faculties. It has its atmosphere of infinity in a width of leisure across which come invisible messengers of life and light, bringing their silent voices of creation.

The process of the packing of fruits gains in merit according to the speed it attains by efficient organization of work, by economizing time through mechanical co-ordination of movements. But the fruit gains its quality of perfection, its flavour and mellowness, not by any impatient ignoring of time but by surrendering itself to the subtle caresses of a sun-lit leisure. And thus we see that the idea of time finds its meaning not as a mere duration of the world-process but as a vehicle of creative energy. In the Hindu Pantheon, the deity of time has its other name as the deity of energy, for we find that time not merely measures but it works. We do not know why a certain period of time is necessary for certain changes to happen, why food should not instantaneously be digested, why the mind should at all depend upon time for the assimilation of thoughts. In fact, we never solve the mystery why there should at all be a process of creation which is a process in time.

It is evident that the modern age is riding on a tornado of rapidity. Quickness of speed in an enormity of material production is jealously competing with its own past every moment. We cannot stop its course, and should not, even if we could. Our only anxiety with regard to it is that we may forget that slow productions of leisure are of immense value to man, for these only can give balance to the reckless rush of ambition, give rhythm to the life that misses its happiness by missing the cadence of chastity in its enjoyment; these only can impart meaning to an accumulation which knows how to grow to a hugeness but not to a majesty of expression. As I have said in the beginning, all civilizations are living wealths that have grown on the deep soil of a rich leisure. They are for conferring honour to our personality and giving it its best worth. The perfection of our personality does not principally consist of qualities that generate cleverness or deftness or even accuracy of observation, or the rationality that analyses and forms generalizations. It depends mostly upon our training in truth and love, upon ideals that go to the root of our being. And these require the ministration of quiet time for their adequate recognition and realization in life.

A true gentleman is the product of patient centuries of cultivated leisure that has nourished into preciousness a vision of honour whose value is higher than that of life itself. When I first visited Japan I had the opportunity of observing there the two parts of the human sphere strongly contrasted; one, on which grew up the ancient continent of social ideals, standards of beauty, codes of personal behaviour; and on the other part, the fluid element, the perpetual current that carried wealth to its shores from all parts of the world. In half a century's time Japan has been able to make her own the mighty spirit of progress which suddenly burst upon her one morning in a storm of insult and menace. China also has had her rousing when her self-respect was being knocked to pieces through a series of helpless years, and I am sure she also will

master before long the instrument which hurt her to the quick. But the ideals that imparted life and body to Japanese civilization had been nourished in the reverent hopes of countless generations through ages which were not primarily occupied in an incessant hunt for opportunities, which had large tracts of leisure in them necessary for the blossoming of life's beauty and the ripening of her wisdom. These ideals had become one with the nature of the people and therefore these people were often unconscious of their profound value while they were noisily proud of some culture from a foreign market for which they had to pay in cash, because of its utility, and not in sacrifice which is claimed by a truth that has its ultimate value in itself. It is something like being boastful of an expensive pair of high-heeled shoes which has no compunction in insulting the beautiful contour of the living feet that have reached their perfect form in man through ages of evolution.

We have seen the modern factories in Japan, seen numerous mechanical organizations and engines of destruction of the latest type. Along with them we also see some fragile vase, some small pieces of silk, some architecture of sublime simplicity, some perfect lyric of bodily movement. Also we have seen these people's expression of courtesy daily extracting from them a considerable amount of time and trouble, their traditions of behaviour, any deviation from which, however inevitable, so often drove them to suicide. All these have come not from any accurate knowledge of things but from an intense consciousness of the value of reality which takes time for its realization. What Japan reveals in its skilful manipulation of telegraphic wires and railway lines, of machines for manufacturing things and for killing men, is more or less similar to what we see in other countries which have a similar opportunity for training. But in its art of living, its pictures, its code of conduct, the various forms of beauty which its religious and social ideals assume, Japan reveals its own personality which, in order to be of any worth, must be unique. This national personality acquires its richness from its assimilation of some ideal and not from its possession of some trade secret, some up-to-date machinery of efficiency.

What gives us cause for anxiety is the fact that the spirit of progress occupies a great deal more of our mind to-day than the deeper life process of our being which requires depth of leisure for its sustenance. In the present age the larger part of our growth takes place on the outside, and our inner spirit has not the time to accept it and harmonize it into a completeness of creation. In other words, the modern world has not allowed itself time to evolve a religion, a profound principle of reconciliation that can fashion out of all conflicting elements a living work of art—his society. The creative ideals of life, necessary for giving expression to the fulness of humanity, were developed centuries ago. And when to-day these suffer from some misfit as a result of a constant expansion of knowledge and a variety of new experiences, we fail to adjust them into a more comprehensive synthesis than before, and thus not only lose faith in them but in the fundamental principle that they represent. With strenuous efforts, we make stupendous heaps of materials and when the complaint comes that they miss the character of architecture, we contemptu-

ously say that architecture is a superstition and for a democratic age rude piles are more significant than the rhythmic form of a building. Such remarks are easy to make only because we lack leisure truly to know our minds. We are only familiar with the surface of our life which is constantly being soiled and burdened with the sweepings of an enormous traffic. We grow to be fond of a perpetual shabbiness produced by a miscellany of fragments only because the relegation of these to their proper places requires time. And we say time is money, while we forget to say that leisure is wealth, the wealth which is a creation of human spirit whose material may be money.

Invention, construction and organization are spreading fast along the high road of our history, but the creative genius of man which acknowledged its mission to express all that has permanent value in his personality is everyday losing its dignity. It accepts cheap payments from the busy multitude, it is engaged in always keeping irreverent minds amused, it makes faces at things men held sacred and tries to prove that the ideals of social life that had given us grace, the majesty of self-mastery and the heroism of voluntary acceptance of suffering werefor the most part unreal, false coins made current by the weak for the pathetic purpose of self-deception. Compressed and crowded time has its use when dealing with material things but living truths must have for their full significance a perspective of wide leisure. The cramped time produces deformities and degeneracy, and the mind constantly pursued by a fury of haste, develops a chronic condition of spiritual dyspepsia. It easily comes to believe that reality is truly represented by nightmare, that nothing but disease is frankly honest in its revelation of the normal, that only the lowest is reliable in its explanation of the highest in a language crudely obscure. Drunkenness may be defined as the habit of enjoyment forced out through a narrowed aperture of sensibility in jets of abnormal sharpness; and all enjoyment takes a drunken character for those who try to snatch it away from fugitive hours that come jumping to them in a staccato style. They become hopelessly addicted to undiluted sensationalism for their brief moments of recreations, and literature demanded by them grows bewilderingly turbulent with psychological perversity and intellectual somersaults. Incessantly handling things that have their market price they lose the judgment of the world of values, the self-luminous truth, the kingdom of personality. They claim explanation from every fact for its truth in a universe of reality while they forget that our personality also needs an adequate explanation in a universal truth.

A particle of sand would be nothing if it did not have its background in the whole physical world.

1929

INDIA AND EUROPE

No REPORT HAS yet been published which correctly represents my views regarding India and Europe. Almost always the emphasis is put in the wrong place, and so the report becomes one-sided.

The one outstanding visible relationship of Europe with Asia to-day is that of exploitation; in other words its origins are commercial and material. It is physical strength that is most apparent to us in Europe's enormous dominion and commerce, illimitable in its extent and immeasurable in its appetite. Our spirit sickens at it. Everywhere we come against barriers in the way of direct human kinship. The harshness of these external contacts is galling, and therefore the feeling of unrest ever grows more oppressive. There is no people in the whole of Asia to-day which does not look upon Europe with fear and suspicion.

Yet there was a time when we were fascinated by Europe. She had inspired us with a new hope. We believed that her chief mission was to preach the gospel of liberty to the world. We had come then to know only her ideal side through her literature and art. But slowly, Asia and Africa have become the main spheres of Europe's secular activities, where her chief preoccupations have been the earning of dividends, the administration of empires, and the extension of commerce.

Europe's warehouses and business offices, her police outposts and soldiers' barracks, have been multiplied, while her human relationships have declined.

Towards those who are being exploited, there always is wont to grow up a feeling of contempt. For exploitation itself becomes easier, if we can succeed in creating a callousness towards those who are its victims. Just as whenever we go out fishing we are inclined to regard fishes as the least sensitive of all living creatures, so it becomes quite pleasant to loot the Orient, if only we can make our own moral justification easy by relegating coloured races to the lowest groupings of mankind.

Thus modern Europe, scientific and puissant, has portioned out this wide earth into two divisions. Through her filter, whatever is finest in Europe cannot pass through to reach us in the East. In our traffic with her, we have learnt, as the biggest fact of all, that she is efficient, terribly efficient. We may feel astounded by this efficiency; but if, through fear, we bring to it our homage of respect, then we ourselves need to realize that we are fast going down to the very depths of misfortune; for to do such homage is like the crude barbarity of bringing sacrificial offerings to some god which thirsts for blood. It is on account of this fact, and in order to retain her self-respect, that the whole of Asia to-day denies the moral superiority of Europe. At the same time, to withstand her ravages, Asia is preparing to imitate that ruthless aspect which slays, which eats raw flesh, which tries to make the swallowing process easier by putting the blame on the victim.

Personally I do not believe that Europe is occupied only with material things. She may have lost her faith in religion, but not in humanity. Man, in his essential nature, is spiritual and can never remain solely material. If, however, we in the East merely realize Europe in this external aspect, we shall be seriously at fault. For in Europe the ideals of human activity are truly of the soul. They are not paralysed by shackles of scriptural injunctions. Their sanction lies in the heart of man and not in something external to him. This freedom from the changeless, irrational bondage of external regulations, is a very big asset in modern Europe. Man is pouring forth his life for knowledge, for the land of his birth, and for the service of humanity. He acts thus through the urge of his own innate ideals, not because some revered *pundit* has ordained it.

It is this attitude of mind in Europe which is essentially spiritual. For true spirituality always brings freedom with it. The freedom that Europe has achieved to-day in action, in knowledge, in literature and in art, is a freedom from the rigid inanity of matter. The fetters, that we forge in the name of religion, enchain the spiritual man more securely than even worldly ties. The home of freedom is in the spirit of man. That spirit refuses to recognize any limit either to action, or to knowledge. It is courageous enough to cross over the barriers of nature, and the limitations of natural instincts; it never regrets immediate loss that may, or may not, lead to gains in a far distant future.

When the aeroplane goes up in the sky, we may wonder at it as the perfection of material power; but behind this lies the human spirit, strong and alive. It is this spirit of man which has refused to recognize the boundaries of nature as final. Nature has put the fear of death in man's mind to moderate his power within the limits of safety; but man in Europe has snapped his fingers at Death and torn asunder the bonds. Only then did he earn the right to fly—a right of the gods.

But even here the adverse forces—the titans—are alive, who are ready to rain down death from the air. But the titans are not in sole possession. In Europe, there is a constant war between the gods and the titans. Often the titans are victorious; but the victory is sometimes with the gods.

We should not count the result in mere numbers. The calculation should be based on Truth, and on the inner reality of the victory. It is therefore that the Bhagavad Gita says that Truth, even though slight, preserves us from great calamity. The manifestation of the gods is on the positive side of Truth; on the negative side are the titans. So long as we have the least response from the positive side, there need be no fear. The war of the gods and the titans is only possible where the gods are active. There can be no war where both sides are equally feeble.

It is easy enough for us, when someone reviles us for our social evils, to point at worse evils in Europe; but this is negative. The bigger thing to remember is, that in Europe these evils are not stagnant. There, the spiritual force in man is ever trying to come to grips. While, for instance, we find in Europe the evil Giant's fortress of Nationalism, we also find Jack-the-Giant-

Killer. For, there is growing up the international mind. this Giant-killer, the international mind—though small in size—is real. In India, even when we are loudest in our denunciation of Europe, it is often her Giant's fortress that we long to build with awe and worship. We insult Jack with ridicule and suspicion. The chief reason for this is, that in India we have ourselves become material-minded. We are wanting in faith and courage. Since in our country the gods are sleeping, therefore, when the titans come, they devour all our sacrificial offerings,—there is never a hint of strife. The germs of disease are everywhere; but man can resist disease only when his vital force is active and powerful.

So, too, even when the worship of the blood-thirsty and false gods of self-seeking are rampant on all sides, man can lift up his head to the skies if his spirit is awake. In Europe, the whole nature of man is awake. Both matter and spirit are active. They alone become entirely materialistic who are only half men, who cripple the native majesty of the spirit before the blind repetition of unintelligent activities; who are niggardly in knowledge and palsied in action; who are ever insulting themselves by setting up a meaningless ritualism in the place of true worship; who have no difficulty whatever in believing that there is special sanctity inherent in particular forms and peculiar rites, even when their significance is neither known, nor knowable. That is why they are night and day afraid of ghosts and ghouls, gods and demons, of the calendar and the stars, of inauspicious days and inauspicious moments. Being themselves weak in spirit, they are enslaved within and enfettered in the outer world.

1929

WEALTH AND WELFARE

THE STANDARD OF living in modern times has been raised far higher than the average level of our necessity. Where the temptation of high living, normally confined to a negligible small section of the community, becomes widespread, its evergrowing burden is sure to prove fatal to civilization. It forces society not only to make provision for the filling of the vessel to the brim, which has its own limit but also for the overflow. This excess, if it is for operative purposes, is a gain, and the expenditure is made true by the profit. But when it is for display and unproductive self-enjoyment then it is an absolute loss which can be suffered with impunity only within certain bounds.

The tendency towards extravagance is natural to man, it is to make manifest his power, his magnanimity. There was a time when it found its play mostly in the surroundings of a king, in the expression of a communal spirit in religion and other collective sentiments. The poorest and the meanest among the citizens found his dignity represented in the public buildings and the pomp and ceremonies of public life. This could never give rise to the personal feeling of envy or fury of insane emulation. Most of the expressions of any great surplus of life and wealth was dedicated to the community. The dark planets merely represent themselves, the radiant star, in its excess of light, represents the constellation: and the wealth reaching that degree of radiance which exceeds the obscure limits of personal necessity once did belong to the illumination of a whole society. This prevented the universal competition in wastefulness which to-day is exhausting human energy and the material resources of the earth.

In former days, in India, public opinion levied heavy taxes upon wealth and most of the public works of the country were voluntarily supported by the rich. Water-supply, medical help, education and amusement were naturally maintained by men of property through a spontaneous adjustment of mutual obligation. This was made possible, because the limits set to the individual right of self-indulgence were narrow, and the surplus wealth easily followed the channel of social responsibility. In such a society, property was the pillar that supported its civilization, and wealth gave opportunity to the fortunate for self-sacrifice.

There are some who believe that the eradication of the idea of property will give the command spirit its full freedom. But we must know that the urge which has given rise to property, is something fundamental in human nature. If you have the power you may tyrannically do violence to all that constitutes property; but you cannot change the constitution of mind itself.

Property is medium for the expression of our personality. If we look at the negative aspect of this personality, we see in it the limits which separate one person from another. And when, in some men, this sense of separateness takes on an intense emphasis, we call them selfish. But its positive aspect reveals the truth, that it is the only medium through which men can communicate with

one another. Most often and for most men, property is the only frame that can give a foundation for the creation of a personal world. It is not merely money, not merely furniture; it does not represent merely acquisitiveness, but is an objective manifestation of our taste, our imagination, our constructive faculties, our desire for self-sacrifice.

Through this creative limitation which is our personality, we receive, we give, we express. Our highest social training is to make our property the richest expression of the best in us, of that which is universal, of our individuality whose greatest illumination is love. As individuals are the units that build the community, so property is the unit of wealth that makes for communal prosperity, when it is alive to its function. Our wisdom lies not in destroying separateness of units, but in maintaining the spirit of unity in its full strength.

When life is simple, wealth does not become too exclusive, and individual property finds no great difficulty in acknowledging its communal responsibility, rather, it becomes its vehicle.

But with the rise of the standard of living, property changes its aspect. It shuts the gate of hospitality, which is the best means of social intercommunication. It displays its wealth in an extravagance which is self-centred. It begets envy and irreconcilable class division. In short, property becomes anti-social. Because, with what is called material progress, property has become intensely individualistic, the method of gaining it has become a matter of science and not of social ethics. It breaks social bonds; it drains the life sap of the community.

There are always insects in our harvest field which, in spite of their robbery, leave a sufficient surplus for the tillers of the soil, and it does not pay to try to exterminate them. But when some pest that has enormous powers of self-multiplication, attacks our food crop, it has to be dealt with as a calamity. In human society, in normal circumstances, there are a number of causes that make for wastage, yet it does not cost us too much to ignore them. But to-day the blight that has fallen on our social life and its resources is disastrous, because it is not restricted to limited regions. It is an epidemic of voracity that has infected the total area of civilization.

We all now-a-days claim our right of freedom to be extravagant in our enjoyment. Not to be able to waste as much upon individual gratification as my rich neighbour does, merely proves a poverty of which I am ashamed, and against which my womenfolk and my parasites are permitted to cherish their grievance. Thus, society, which should be our field of co-operation, has become that of competition, in which, through its tyrannical standard of respectability, all the members are goading one another to spoil themselves to the uttermost limit.

Civilization to-day has turned into a vast catering establishment. It maintains constant feasts for a whole population of gluttons. The intemperance which could safely have been tolerated in a few has spread its contagion to the multitude. The universal greed, produced as a consequence, is the

cause of the meanness, cruelty and lies, in politics and commerce that vitiate the whole human atmosphere.

A civilization with such an unnatural appetite must depend for its existence upon numberless victims and these are being sought in those parts of the world where human flesh is cheap. In Asia and Africa a bartering goes on, whereby the future hope and happiness of entire peoples are sold for the sake of providing fastidious fashion with an endless train of rubbish.

The consequence of such material and moral drain is more evident when one studies the conditions manifested in the fatness of the cities and the physical and mental anaemia of the villages, almost everywhere in the world. For cities have become inevitably important. They represent energy and materials concentrated for the satisfaction of that exaggerated appetite, which is the characteristic symptom of modern civilization. Such an abnormal devouring process cannot be carried on, unless certain parts of the social body conspire and organize to feed upon the whole. This is suicidal; but before its progressive degeneracy ends in death, the disproportionate enlargement of the particular section looks formidably great, and conceals the starved pallor of the entire body—the sacrifice of the large maintaining the small in its enormity, and creating for the time being an illusion of wealth.

The capital needed for the commerce of life accumulates in villages; the city draws upon that for its various functions of civilization. So long as these are productive and creative, it is no loss. But when a disproportionate part of it goes to supply fuel to the fire of an extravagant self-indulgence, precious materials of life are reduced to ash heaps. In a fire-play of recklessness the spendthrift exhausts his future in making a burning rocket of his immediate present, sending it up to the void in a dazzling speed of progress. But it is a brilliant process of dissolution, because by its erratic excesses the food is consumed not for feeding life but for pampering a flame of passion.

1930

THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION OF THE VISVA-BHARATI

I HAVE BEEN asked to speak this evening to my invisible audience about the educational mission to which I have devoted my life and I am thankful for this opportunity.

I am an artist and not a man of science, and therefore my institution necessarily has assumed the aspect of a work of art and not that of a pedagogical laboratory. And this is the reason why I find it difficult to give you a distinct idea of my work which is continually growing for the last thirty years. With it my own mind has grown, and my own ideal of education found freedom to reach its fullness through a vital process so elusive that the picture of its unity cannot be analysed.

Children's minds are sensitive to the influences of the great world to which they have been born. This delicate receptivity of their passive mind helps them, without their feeling any strain, to master language, that most complex instrument of expression full of ideas that are indefinable and symbols that deal with abstractions. Through their natural gift of guessing, children learn the meaning of the words which we cannot explain.

But it is just at this critical period that the child's life is brought into the education factory, lifeless, colourless, dissociated from the context of the universe, with bare white walls staring like eyeballs of the dead. The children have to sit inert whilst lessons are pelted at them like hailstones on flowers.

I believe that children should be surrounded with the things of nature that have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble on and be surprised at everything that happens before them in the life of to-day. The new to-morrow will stimulate their attention with new facts of life.

The minds of the adults are crowded; the stream of lessons perpetually flowing from the heart of nature does not fully touch them; they choose those that are useful, rejecting the rest as inadmissible. The children have no such distractions. With them every new fact comes to a mind that is always open, with an abundant hospitality. And through this exuberant, indiscriminate acceptance they learn innumerable facts within a short time, amazing compared to our own slowness. These are the most important lessons of life that are thus learnt in the first few years of our career.

Because, when I was young I underwent the mechanical pressure of a teaching process, one of man's most cruel, and most wasteful mistakes, I felt it my duty to found a school where the children might be free in spite of the school.

At the age of twelve I was first coerced into learning English. Most of you in this country are blissfully unconscious of the mercilessness of your own language. You will admit, however, that neither its spelling, nor its syntax, is perfectly rational. The penalty for this *I* had to pay, without having done anything to deserve it, with the exception of being born ignorant.

When in the evening my English teacher used to come I was dragged to my daily doom at a most unsympathetic desk and an unprepossessing text book containing lessons that are followed by rows of separated syllables with accent-marks like soldiers' bayonets.

As for that teacher, I can never forgive him. He was so inordinately conscientious! He insisted on coming every single evening,—there never seemed to be either illness or death in his family. He was so preposterously punctual too. I remember how the fascination for the frightful attracted me every evening to the terrace facing the road; and just at the right moment, his fateful umbrella,—for bad weather never prevented him from coming,—would appear at the bend of our lane.

Remembering the experience of my young days, of the school masters and the class rooms, also knowing something of the natural school which Nature herself supplies to all her creatures, I established my institution in a beautiful spot, far away from the town, where the children had the greatest freedom possible under the shade of ancient trees and the field around open to the verge of horizon.

From the beginning I tried to create an atmosphere which I considered to be more important than the class teaching. The atmosphere of nature's own beauty was there waiting for us from a time immemorial with her varied gifts of colours and dance, flowers and fruits with the joy of her mornings and the peace of her starry nights. I wrote songs to suit the different seasons, to celebrate the coming of Spring and the resonant season of the rains following the pitiless months of summer. When nature herself sends her message we ought to acknowledge its compelling invitation. While the kiss of rain thrills the heart of the surrounding trees if we pay all our dutiful attention to mathematics we are ostracised by the spirit of universe. Our holidays are unexpected like Nature's own. Clouds gather above the rows of the palm trees without any previous notice; we gladly submit to its sudden suggestion and run wildly away from our Sanskrit grammar. To alienate our sympathy from the world of birds and trees is a barbarity which is not allowed in my institution.

I invited renowned artists from the city to live at the school, leaving them free to produce their own work which the boys and girls watch if they feel inclined. It is the same with my own work. I compose my songs and poems, the teachers sit round me and listen. The children are naturally attracted and they peep in and gather, even if they do not fully understand, something fresh from the heart of the composer.

From the commencement of our work we have encouraged our children to be of service to our neighbours from which has grown up a village reconstruction work in our neighbourhood unique in the whole of India. Round our educational work the villages have grouped themselves in which the sympathy for nature and service for man have become one. In such extension of sympathy and service our mind realizes its true freedom.

Along with this has grown an aspiration for even a higher freedom, a freedom from all racial and national prejudice. Children's sympathy is often

deliberately made narrow and distorted making them incapable of understanding alien peoples with different languages and cultures. This causes us, when our growing souls demand it, to grope after each other in ignorance, to suffer from the blindness of this age. The worst fetters come when children lose their freedom of heart in love.

We are building up our institution upon the ideal of the spiritual unity of all races. I hope it is going to be a great meeting place for individuals from all countries who believe in the divine humanity, and who wish to make atonement for the cruel disloyalty displayed against her by men. Such idealists I have frequently met in my travels in the West, often unknown persons, of no special reputation, who suffer and struggle for a cause generally ignored by the clever and the powerful. These individuals, I am sure, will alter the outlook for the future. By them will be ushered a new sunrise of truth and love, like that great personality, who had only a small number of disciple from among the insignificant, and who at the end of his career presented a pitiful picture of utter failure. He was reviled by those in power, unknown by the larger world, and suffered an inglorious death, and yet through the symbol of this utmost failure he conquers and lives for ever.

For some time past education has lacked idealism in its mere exercise of an intellect which has no depth of sentiment. The one desire produced in the heart of the students has been an ambition to win success in the world, not to reach some inner standard of perfection, not to obtain self-emancipation.

Let me confess this fact, that I have my faith in higher ideals. At the same time, I have a great feeling of delicacy in giving utterance to them, because of certain modern obstacles. We have now-a-days to be merely commonplace. We have to wait on the reports in the newspapers, representative of the whole machinery which has been growing up all over the world for the making of life superficial. It is difficult to fight through such obstructions and to come to the centre of humanity.

However I have this one satisfaction that I am at least able to put before you the mission to which these last years of my life have been devoted. As a servant of the great cause I must be frank and strong in urging upon you this mission. I represent in my institution an ideal of brotherhood where men of different countries and different languages can come together. I believe in the spiritual unity of man, and therefore I ask you to accept this task from me. Unless you come and say, 'We also recognize this ideal', I shall know that this mission has failed. Do not merely discuss me as a guest, but as one who has come to ask your love, your sympathy and your faith in the following of a great cause.

II

There is no meaning in such words as spiritualising the machine, we can spiritualise our own being which makes use of the machine, just as there is

* In reply to the question whether Machines can be spiritualised.

nothing good or bad in our bodily organs, but the moral qualities are in our mind. When the temptation is small our moral nature easily overcomes it, but when the bribe that is offered to our soul is too big we do not even realize that its dignity is offended. To-day the profit that the machine brings to our door is too big and we do not hesitate to scramble for it even at the cost of our humanity. The shrinking of the man in us is concealed by the augmentation of things outside and we lack the time to grieve over the loss. We can only hope that science herself will help us to bring back sanity to the human world by lessening the opportunity to gamble with our fortune. The means of production constructed by science in her attempts to gain access into nature's storehouse are tremendously complex which only proves her own immaturity just as simplicity is wanting in the movements of a swimmer who is inexpert. It is this cumbersome complexity in the machinery which makes it not only unavailable to the majority of mankind but also compels us to centralise it in monster factories, uprooting the workers' life from its natural soil and creating unhappiness. I do not see any other way to extricate us from these tangled evils except to wait for science to simplify our means of production and thus lessen the enormity of individual greed.

I believe that the social unrest prevalent to-day all over the world is owing to the anarchy of spirit in the modern civilization.

What is called progress is the progress in the mechanical contrivances; it is in fact an indefinite extension of our physical limbs and organs which, owing to the enormous material advantage that it brings to us, has tempted the modern man away from his inner realm of spiritual values. The attainment of perfection in human relationship through the help of religion, and cultivation of our social qualities occupied the most important place in our civilization up till now. But to-day our homes have dissolved into hotels, community life is stifled in the dense and dusty atmosphere of the office, men and women are afraid of love, people clamour for their rights and forget their obligations, and they value comfort more than happiness and the spirit of display more than that of beauty.

Great civilizations in the East as well as in the West, have flourished in the past because they produced food for the spirit of man for all time; they tried to build their life upon the faith in ideals, the faith which is creative. These great civilizations were at last run to death by men of the type of our precocious schoolboys of modern times, smart and superficially critical, worshippers of self, shrewd bargainers in the market of profit and power, efficient in their handling of the ephemeral, who presume to buy human souls with their money and throw them into their dust bins when they have been sucked dry, and who, eventually, driven by suicidal forces of passion, set their neighbours' houses on fire and are themselves enveloped by the flame.

It is some great ideal which creates great societies of men it is some blind passion which breaks them to pieces. They thrive so long as they produce food for life; they perish when they burn up life in insatiate self-gratification. We

have been taught by our sages that it is Truth and not things which saves man from annihilation.

The reward of truth is peace, the reward of truth is happiness. The people suffer from the upsetting of equilibrium when power is there and no inner truth to which it is related, like a motor car in motion whose driver is absent.

1930

MEETING OF THE EAST AND THE WEST

I HAVE FELT the meeting of the East and the West in my own individual life. I belong to the latter end of the Nineteenth Century. And to our remote country in Bengal, when I was a boy, there came a voice from across the sea. I listened to it. It would be difficut to imagine what it meant for me in those days. We realized the great heroic ideal which had been held in Ancient Greece and that art which gave expression to its greatness. I was deeply stirred, and felt as if I had discovered a new planet on the horizon.

THE MESSAGE OF THE WEST IN THE 19TH CENTURY

It was the same feeling which I had when I listened to those in my family who recited verses from English literatue and from the great poets of those days. Then also I felt as if a new prophet of the human world had been revealed to my mind.

You all know it was the last vanishing twilight of the Romantic West. We had been living in the atmosphere of the lyrical literature of poets like Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, and we know what inspiration they had within them. And what it was for the rest of the world. There was an upheavel of idealism. In Europe, the French Reovlution had not died out, and people were dreaming of freedom, of the brotherhood of man. They still believed in the human ideals that have their permanent value, ultimate value in themselves. And it moved my heart. I cannot express how it did move my soul.

I remember as a boy how a friend who had just read a poem came running to me in the night when I was asleep and awakened me, saying, 'Have you read this?' And he recited the lines to me, and it stirred us deeply. It was that atmosphere, that human aspect of the Western civilization which appealed to us. It was the humanity of the West. It was not anything mechanical; it did not represent any physical or material quality. Ah, no. It was the message from the heart of the West that touched us deeply.

The West at that time believed in freedom of personality. We heard about Garibaldi, about Mazzini, and it was a new revelation, an aspect of humanity with which we were not quite familiar—the great ideal of the freedom of man, freedom of self expression for all races and for all countries. And we had great reverence for the people who were dedicated to that dream, through their literature, and also through their practical life.

THE MODERN WEST

I may tell you what I think is the characteristic difference to-day between the East and the West. We, in the East believe in personality. In the West you have your admiration for power.

Whenever our heart is touched with something that is perfect in human nature, in its completeness, in the spiritual aspect of it, we bow our heads before it. We have a feeling of reverence for the divine in man. And I thought that this human aspect of civlization, which I saw and which I realized in the West when I was young, was something permanent that would help to save the whole world.

There are times when some particular people play the part of messengers of humanity. They come to rescue human relations from all kinds of fetters of ignorance or moral degradation and despair and weakness of will. We thought the present age belonged to the West, that they had come to save us, to save the whole world from all forms of weakness and which still remains inexhaustible. All these great revelations of history. We knew what India herself had done in olden times. We knew what Greece had offered to humanity and which still remains inexhaustible. All these great civilizations had the effect of redeeming the minds of men from fetters and narrowness, from sluggishness and stupidity.

It is evident that this modern age can belong to the West. You have the illumination, and we have been waiting for long that it should reach us in the East. And we hoped that you would come to us with a message which was universal, which had nothing provincial or exclusively national in it, and in a language that was not ashamed to have itself surrounded by an atmosphere of beauty,—a beauty that had a universal appeal.

And I say as an individual that the West and the East did meet in India in my younger days. But how short was that twilight of a vanishing age, of chivalry, of idealism higher and greater than one's nationality. That age came to an end, and you know, in what a great clash and conflagration of war and misery all over the world.

THE MENACE OF POWER

And what is the harvest of your civilization? You do not see from the outside. You do not realize what a terrible menace you have become to man. We are afraid of you. And everywhere people are suspicious of each other. All the great countries of the West are preparing for war, for some great work of desolation that will spread poison all over the world. And this poison is within their own selves. They try, and try to find some solution, but they do not succeed, because they have lost their faith in the personality of man.

They do not believe in the wisdom of the soul. Their minds are filled with mutual suspicion and hatred and anger and yet they try to invent some machinery which will solve the difficulties. They ask for disarmament, but it cannot be had from the outside. They have efficiency, but that alone does not help. Why? Because man is human, while machinery is impersonal. Men of power have efficiency in outward things; but the personality of man is lost. You do not feel it, the divine in man, the divinity which is in humanity.

I have felt it, and I have said to myself, I have repeated that song: 'Where shall I find him? Man the Great? The Supreme Man?' Not in the machinery

of power and wealth shall I find the humanity of the world. If he is not in the heart of a civilization, where is he? The great man, the harvester, the music-maker, the dreamer of dreams, where is he?

Almost every day I feel my heart go back to my own country, to the personal, the dreamer, the believer in God. I seek Him, and I want to go back to my own country. I have my school there. Do not think that it is an ordinary school. I enjoy the wealth of human relationship there. Those boys and girls, they are my children. There is something that is indescribable in that school. Our relationship is spiritual—and I may not merit it, but I know that they do revere *Man* in my own person; not the schoolmaster, but something higher than that. It is not superstition. In the East we believe in personality which is above all things.

You fight against evil, and that is a great thing. I often think you should come to help us fight all those difficulties, those material evils, from which we suffer. We have been praying for centuries, that the West would really come to us, that their chivalry would help us in our trouble. We are unfortunate. We have much need, for our injuries are great. We had formerly our own system of education—that has vanished. We had our industries to help to eke out the income of those dependent upon agriculture for their livelihood, but all those industries have vanished like the autumn leaves. And we pray that the West would come to us as a member of a common humanity. We claim it from you who have wealth which is overflowing, and we are in the direst and deepest shadow of poverty and distress on our side of the world.

GANDHIJI'S SPIRITUAL POWER

We have been waiting for the Person. Such a personality as we see in Mahatma Gandhi (*applause*). It is only possible in the East for such a man to become a great personality. He has neither physical nor material power, but through his great influence people who have been in subjection to all kinds of tyrannical power have stood up; and he is the strongest spiritual power in this world to-day. Not because of his political prudence, but for his spiritual influence the people believe in him, and they are ready to die for their faith. They are ready to suffer. It is a miracle that these people, downtrodden for centuries, are coming out, and without doing any injury to others, they suffer and through suffering, conquer.

And our women,—only the other day they were secluded in their own inner appartments—they have come out to follow this man, this leader. Not an association, not an organization, not a politician, but a Man! And his message goes deep into our veins. He attacks the enemies that are within us. Not like the political machinery which you have that attacks from the outside and that tries to work through the external. But he attacks the inner man. They believe in him, in this man who is not a Brahmin, for he belongs to a class of money-makers who have been despised for centuries.

PERSONALITY IN HUMAN HISTORY

When times were dark, there came a Man in other days to people who were seeking slavation, emancipation from evil. He came to their door. The babe who was born centuries ago brought exaltation to man. Not machinery, not association, not organizations, but a human babe, and people were amazed. And when all the machinery will be rusted, he will live.

I have felt that the civilization of the West to-day has its law and order, but no personality. It has come to the perfection of a mechanical order but what is there to humanize it? It is the Person who is in the heart of all beings. When you follow the atoms, you come to something which has no form, no color. It is all abstraction; it is reduced to some mathematical formulae. But Personality goes beyond the heart of these atoms. I have seen, I have known it within me, in the depths of my feeling. And I know that only when you come to Him will there be peace.

1930

MY PICTURES

I

AN APOLOGY IS due from me for my intrusion into the world of pictures and thus offering a perfect instance to the saying that those who do not know that they know not are apt to be rash where angels are timidly careful. I, as an artist, cannot claim any merit for my courage; for it is the unconscious courage of the unsophisticated, like that of one who walks in dream on a perilous path, who is saved only because he is blind to the risk.

The only training which I had from my young days was the training in rhythm in thought, the rhythm in sound. I had come to know that rhythm gives reality to that which is desultory, which is insignificant in itself. And therefore, when the scratches in my manuscript cried, like sinners, for salvation, and assailed my eyes with the ugliness of their irrelevance, I often took more time in rescuing them into merciful finality of rhythm than in carrying on what was my obvious task. In the process of this salvage work I came to discover one fact, that in the universe of forms there is a perpetual activity of natural selection in lines, and only the fittest survives which has in itself the fitness of cadence, and I felt that to solve the unemployment problem of the homeless heterogeneous into interrelated balance of fulfilment is creation itself.

My pictures are my versification, in lines. If by chance they are entitled to claim recognition, it must be primarily for some rhythmic significance of form which is ultimate and not for any interpretation of an idea or representation of a fact.

May 1930

II

WHEN, AT THE age of five, I was compelled to learn and to repeat the lessons from my text-book, I had the notion that literature had its mysterious manifestation on the printed pages, that it represented some supernatural tyranny of an immaculate perfection. Such a despairing feeling of awe was dissipated from my mind when by chance I discovered in my own person that verse-making was not beyond the range of an untrained mind and tottering handwriting. Since then my sole medium of expression has been words, followed at sixteen by music, which also came to me as a surprise.

In the meanwhile the modern art movement, following the line of the oriental tradition, was started by my nephew Abanindranath. I watched his activities with an envious mood of self-diffidence, being thoroughly convinced that my fate had refused me passport across the strict boundaries of letters.

But one thing which is common to all arts is the principle of rhythm which transforms inert materials into living creations. My instinct for it and my training in its use led me to know that lines and colours in art are no carriers of information; they seek their rhythmic incarnation in pictures. Their

ultimate purpose is not to illustrate or to copy some outer fact or inner vision, but to evolve a harmonious wholeness which finds its passage through our eyesight into imagination. It neither questions our mind for meaning nor burdens it with unmeaningness, for it is, above all, meaning. Desultory lines obstruct the freedom of our vision with the inertia of their irrelevance. They do not move with the great march of all things. They have no justification to exist and therefore they rouse up against them their surroundings; they perpetually disturb peace. For this reason the scattered scratches and corrections in my manuscripts cause me annoyance. They represent regrettable mischance, like a gapingly foolish crowd stuck in a wrong place, undecided as to how or where to move on. But if the spirit of a dance is inspired in the heart of the crowd, the unrelated many would find a perfect unity and be relieved of its hesitation between to be and not to be. I try to make my corrections dance, connect them in a rhythmic relationship and transform accumulation into adornment.

This has been my unconscious training in drawing. I find disinterested pleasure in this work of reclamation, often giving to it more time and care than to my immediate duty in literature that has the sole claim upon my attention, often aspiring to a permanent recognition from the world. It interests me deeply to watch how lines find their life and character, as their connection with each other develops in varied cadences, and how they begin to speak in gesticulations. I can imagine the universe to be a universe of lines which in their movements and combinations pass on their signals of existence along the interminable chain of moments. The rocks and clouds, the trees, the waterfalls, the dance of the fiery orbs, the endless procession of life send up across silent eternity and limitless space a symphony of gestures with which mingles the dumb wail of lines that are widowed gypsies roaming about for a chance union of fulfilment.

In the manuscript of creation there occur erring lines and erasures, solitary incongruities, standing against the world principle of beauty and balance, carrying perpetual condemnation. They offer problems and therefore material to the *Visvakarma*, the Great Artist, for they are the sinners whose obstreperous individualism has to be modulated into a new variation of universal concord.

And this was my experience with the casualties in my manuscripts, when the vagaries of the ostracized mistakes had their conversion into rhythmic inter-relationship, giving birth to unique forms and characters. Some assumed the temperature exaggeration of a probable animal that had unaccountably missed its chance of existence, some a bird that only can soar in our dreams and find its nest in some hospitable lines that we may offer it in our canvas. Some lines showed anger, some placid benevolence, through some lines ran an essential laughter that refused to apply for its credential to the shape of a mouth which is a mere accident. These lines often expressed passions that were abstract, evolved characters that hung upon subtle suggestions. Though I did not know whether such unclassified apparitions of non-deliberate origin

A Painting by Rabindranath Tagore

could claim their place in decent art, they gave me intense satisfaction and very often made me neglect my important works. In connection with this came to my mind the analogy of music's declaration of independence. There can be no question that originally melody accompanied words, giving interpretation to the sentiments contained in them. But music threw off this bond of subservience and represented moods abstracted from words, and characters that were indefinite. In fact, this liberated music does not acknowledge that feelings which can be expressed in words are essential for its purpose, though they may have their secondary place in musical structure. This right of independence has given music its greatness, and I suspect that evolution of pictorial and plastic art develops on this line, aiming to be freed from an absolute alliance with natural facts or incidents.

However, I need not formulate any doctrine of art but be contented by simply saying that in my case my pictures did not have their origin in trained discipline, in tradition and deliberate attempt at illustration, but in my instinct for rhythm, my pleasure in harmonious combination of lines and colours.

July 1930

III

THE WORLD OF sound is a tiny bubble in the silence of the infinite. The Universe has its only language of gesture, it talks in the voice of pictures and dance. Every object in this world proclaims in the dumb signal of lines and colours the fact that it is not a mere logical abstraction or a mere thing of use but is unique in itself, it carries the miracle of its existence.

There are countless things which we know but do not recognize their own dignity of truth, independent of the fact that they are injurious or beneficial. It is enough that a flower exists as a flower, but my cigarette has no other claim upon me for its recognition but as being subservient to my smoking habit.

But there are other things which in their dynamic quality of rhythm or character make us insistently acknowledge the fact that they are. In the book of creation they are the sentences that are underlined with coloured pencil and we cannot pass them by. They seem to cry to us, 'See, here I am', and our mind bows its head and never question, 'Why are you?'

In a picture the artist creates the language of undoubted reality, and we are satisfied that we see. It may not be the representation of a beautiful woman but that of a commonplace donkey, or of something that has no external credential of truth in nature but only in its own inner artistic significance.

People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures. I remain silent even as my pictures are. It is for them to express and not to explain. They have nothing ulterior behind their own appearance for the thoughts to explore and words to describe, and if that appearances carries its ultimate worth, then they remain, otherwise they are rejected and forgotten even though they may have some scientific truth or ethical justification.

It is related in the drama of *Shakuntala*, how one busy morning there

stood humbly before the maiden of the forest-hermitage a stranger youth who did not give his name. Her soul acknowledged him at once without question. She did know him not but only saw him and for her he was the artist God's masterpiece to which must be offered the full value of love.

Days passed. There came at her gate another guest, a venerable sage who was formidable. And, sure of his claim to a dutiful welcome, proudly he announced. 'I am here!' But she missed his voice, for it did not carry with it an inherent meaning, it needed a commentary of household virtue, pious words of sanction which could assign a sacred value to a guest, the value that was not of the irresponsible art, but of moral responsibility.

Love is kindred to art, it is inexplicable. Duty can be measured by the degree of its benefit, utility by the profit and power it may bring, but art by nothing but itself. There are other factors of life which are visitors that come and go. Art is the guest that comes and remains. The others may be important but art is inevitable.

1930

THE FIRST AND THE LAST PROPHETS OF PERSIA

In the beginning of our history when individuals gathered together not as a crowd but as a community, they instinctively realized a mysterious source of power in this meeting. They felt that it was not a mere obvious fact represented by a number, but a truth that could not be measured, counted and analysed. It was an energising force that was creative, and according to the degree of perfection in the solidarity of such gathering, it spontaneously gave rise to a richness of social life, and the beauty and wisdom that found innumerable channels of expression.

This ineffable spirit of unity is the fundamental truth of creation. When in our scientific curiosity to probe the mystery of appearance we snap the bond of relationship, the appearance itself vanishes, and what remains is some abstract mathematical formulae, invisible, intangible, unimaginable. At a certain stage of the analysis of things all that remains is named as protons and electrons, logically proving their unsubstantial existence, but not the existence of what appears in its wholeness as the rock, or flower, you or me. Some great mystery of unity binds these into individual form and character, and relates them to all things far and near; and such immensity of facts held together by an infinite spirit of unity, manifests its creative purpose in various forms and movements.

In the human world the great truth of unity was also at first realized as a power residing in the community, comprehending and transcending all individuals. This mysterious power according to the primitive people was magical, and they symbolized it in their totems and tried to invoke and propitiate it with their magical rites.

This was the first great discovery of man—the mysterious spirit of unity which was beyond the bounds of quantity that can be measured, and this is religion. But as I have already suggested, religion in its first appearance had the aspect of power, which though it gave unity to the tribe itself, created a strong division outside of it. For power is exclusive and the tribe claimed its God as the source of all powers for its own benefit.

So long as God remained as thus divided, religion became cruel and terribly unjust creating more mischief in this world than any passion that is criminal. Even to-day when God is no longer believed to be specially belonging to the tribe, he is fenced in by sectarianism which gives rise to a fierce spirit of dissension and egotistical boastfulness. Truth when tortured and mutilated becomes more heinous than untruth, and therefore when unbelievers bring proofs of the harm that religion has done to man we cannot but remain silent.

It is the mission of all great prophets to see that religion which is to give us spiritual emancipation should not itself be made a fetter to immure our soul in a dungeon of dogma and formalism giving rise to sectarian vanity that obscures our vision of the spiritual unity of man.

The first Prophet whom we know in the history of man was Zoroaster who preached God as the universal truth of unity, the eternal source of goodness and love; and it is significant that in the same soil of Persia which gave birth to him arose the other great Prophet of the modern age, Baha'u'llah, who also preached God as profoundly one, in all races, tribes and sects, the true worship of whom consists in service that has reason for its guide, and goodness and love for its inner motive principle.

We are here to-night to offer our homage to Baha'u'llah. He is the latest Prophet to come out of Asia. His life is certainly a glorious record of unflinching human search after truth; and his message is of great importance for the progress of civilization.

1930

MY SCHOOL

YOU OUGHT TO know one thing that I am by nature a poet. From my very young days, my only vocation was to express my ideas in verses, give shape to my dreams in my poems.

What was it that impelled me to take up this work for which I am not naturally fit?

When I was young, as usual, I was sent to school. Some of you may have read from the translation of my autobiography about the misadventure I had when I began my career as a student in a school. It was a terribly miserable life, which became absolutely intolerable to me. At that time I did not have the capacity to analyse the reason why I suffered, but then when I grew up, it became quite clear to me what it was that hurt me so deeply to be compelled to attend my class in that school where my parents sent me.

I have my natural love for life, for nature, and for my surroundings where I have my dear ones; and to be snatched away from these natural surroundings with which I had all my inner deeper life of relationship, and to send me an exile, to the school, to the class with its bare white walls, its stare of dead eyes, frightened me every day. When I was once inside these walls, I did not feel natural. It was absolutely a fragment torn away from life and this gave me intense misery because I was uprooted from my own world and sent to surroundings which were dead and unsympathetic, disharmonious and monotonously dull.

It could not be possible for the mind of a child to be able to receive anything in those cheerless surroundings, in the environment of dead routine. And the teachers were like living gramophones, repeating the same lessons day by day in a most dull manner. My mind refused to accept anything from my teacher. With all my heart and soul I seem to have repudiated all that was put before me. And then there were some teachers who were utterly unsympathetic and did not understand at all the sensitive soul of a young boy and tried to punish him for the mistakes he made. Such teachers in their stupidity did not know how to teach, how to impart education to a living mind. And because they failed, they punished their victim. And this was how I suffered for thirteen years of my life.

And then I left school when I was thirteen and in spite of all the pressure exerted on me by my elders, I refused to go to my studies in that school.

Since then I have been educating myself and that process is still being carried on. And whatever I have learned, I have learned outside the classes. And I believe that was a fortunate event in my life—that avoiding the schoolmaster when I was still young. And whatever I have done in later life, if I have shown any special gift or originality, I feel certain it was owing to the fact that I was not drilled into a kind of respectable education, which generally all good boys, good students, have to submit to.

And it went on like that. I took to my own work I retired in a solitary place

near the Ganges and a great part of my life I lived in a house-boat, writing my poems, stories and plays; dreaming my dreams.

I went on till I gradually became known to my own countrymen and claims were made on me from all parts of my country for writings and for various kinds of help. But I kept to my solitude for the greater part of my days. It is very difficult for me to say what it was, how the call came to me to go out of my isolation of literary life and be among my fellow-beings and share their life and help them in their living.

And it is also a surprise to me how I had the courage to take upon myself to start an educational institution for our children, for I had no experience in this line at all. But I had confidence in myself. I knew that I had very profound sympathy for children, and about my knowledge of their psychology I was very certain. I felt that I could help them more than the ordinary teachers who had the delusion to think that they had proper training for their work.

I selected a beautiful place, far away from the contamination of town life, for I myself, in my young days, was brought up in that town in the heart of India, Calcutta, and all the time I had a sort of homesickness for some distant lane somewhere, where my heart, my soul, could have its true emancipation. Though I had no experience of the outer-world, I had in my heart great longing to go away from my enclosure of those walls and from that huge, stony-hearted step-mother, Calcutta. I knew that the mind has its hunger for the ministrations of nature, mother-nature, and so I selected this spot where the sky is unobstructed to the verge of the horizon. There the mind could have its fearless freedom to create its own dreams and the seasons could come with all their colours and movements and beauty into the very heart of the human dwelling.

And there I got a few children around me and I taught them. I was their companion. I sang to them. I composed some musical pieces, some operas and plays, and they took part in those plays. I recited to them our epics and this was the beginning of this school. I had only about five or six students at that time.

People did not have any confidence in a poet and they had a right to doubt my confidence in bringing up the children and truly educating them in their orthodox fashion. And so I had very few students to begin with.

My idea was that education should be a part of life itself and must not be detached from it and be made into something abstract. And so when I brought these children around me, I allowed them to live a complete life. They had perfect freedom to do what they wished, as much liberty as was possible for me to give them. And in all their activities I tried to put before them something which would be interesting to them. I tried to arouse their interests in all things, in nature's beauty and the surrounding villages and also in literature, through play-acting, through listening to music in a natural manner, not through merely class teaching.

They knew when I was employed in writing some drama and they took an intense interest as it went on and developed, and in the process of their rehearsal they got through a great deal more of reading of literature than they

could through grammar and class-teaching. And this was my method. I knew the children's mind. Their subconscious mind is more active than the conscious one, and therefore the important thing is to surround them with all kinds of activities which could stimulate their minds and gradually arouse their interests.

I had musical evenings—not merely music classes, and those boys who at first did not have any special love of music, would, out of curiosity, listen to our songs outside of the room, and gradually they too were drawn into the room and their taste for music developed. I had some of the very great artists of our land and while they went on with their work, the boys could watch them and saw day by day how those works developed.

An atmosphere was created and what was important, this atmosphere had provided the students with a natural impulse to live in harmony with it. In the beginning it was easier to feel this, when I had only a few students; I was then almost their only companion and teacher and it was truly the golden age of our school. I know that the boys who had then the privilege of attending that institution look back on those days with much love and longing. But as the number grew, and it became more and more expensive for me to carry on the school in my own way. In the first place, we in our country have the tradition that it is the teacher who has the responsibility to give education to those who come to him to be taught, and in our country there were students who used to have free tuition, also their lodging free in their teacher's house. It was the teachers who acknowledged their own responsibility. They had the privilege of being educated, and they owed it to society that they should help their students and in return should not claim anything in the shape of fees or remuneration.

And this was our custom from the olden days and I began like that. Free tuition, lodging and boarding and all necessities of life, I supplied to my students out of my own poor resources. But you can imagine with the modern condition of life it was not possible to continue like this, because now you have to get the help of teachers whose salaries are high and there are other expenses which daily seem to increase. I find it impossible now to keep that idea in the heart of this institution that teaching should be a duty of the teacher to impart to the students and that it should not have the atmosphere of a shop where you can buy commodities with money. I was compelled to give up this idea and now gradually it has taken the shape of the ordinary school.

Only I tried my best to have some aspect in the school which they did not have in their orthodox schools. The teachers shared the common life with the boys, it was a community life. In the sports and festivals the teachers and the students fully co-operated with each other. It was not like a cage in which the birds are fed from the outside, but it was like a nest which students themselves co-operated in building up with their own life, with their love, with their daily work and their plays.

I believe that we still have this true to a great extent. It is difficult owing to the fact that my colleagues with whom I have to work are brought up in a

different manner, not having the same chance as I had to play truant when they were young and give up their school-days. They have their own ideas about education, and it is difficult wholly to get rid of them. And so something alien to the central ideal does creep into this institution through those who are there to help me. I had in the beginning to struggle very hard with my teachers, not with the students, as very often happens in other schools. But I had to take sides with the boys when they were punished for no fault of their own, but that of their teachers. I had to be firm and defend the boys, which offended my teachers. I remember one day a new teacher came and when he found that some of the boys were doing their lessons up on the tree, he was furious because of this want of discipline on their part. I had then to protect the boys from the schoolmaster. I told him that when these boys grew up to his age they will not have the great privilege of climbing up to the trees to do their lessons. They would become more respectable and keep away from mother-nature.

But I believe that the atmosphere has been created and it is going on. Now it has grown. The number of the students is increasing year by year, which is not always an advantage. But it cannot be helped.

Another aspect which is of later growth is that the number of girls has been increasing. The co-education system is quite a new thing in India. But it has been working perfectly. We have had no cause for complaint. And very often the boys and girls go out together on excursions; the boys help the girls in bringing fuel and fetching water and the girls cook the dinners for the boys and everything is managed by mutual help. That is a great education in itself.

There is another factor which I consider to be important. I always try to get from outside of India, from Europe and from the far Fast, lecturers, who come to the school to teach and also to share the simple life of the school with our students. This is another factor creating the atmosphere of this place. Our boys are very natural in their relationship with those foreigners, guests and visitors. My idea is that the mind should find its freedom in every respect, and I am sure that our children have through their early training freedom from the barriers of country and race and creeds and prejudices. And it is always difficult to get rid of those when we grow up and even it is sedulously cultivated in our school-books and also by the people who wish the boys to be proud of their own exploits and running down other countries. And this is really clinging to certain prejudices which are considered nationalistic. And with the help of these visitors I have tried my best to make the minds of our boys more hospitable to the guests who come to us and I think I have been successful.

Then there are other activities. We have in the neighbouring villages some primitive people who need our help and we have started some night-schools and our boys go there and teach them. Then you have the village work in connection with our institutions and those boys who have the opportunity to study the conditions of our village life and to know how to help them efficiently through scientific and up-to-date methods of cultivation and of fighting diseases. To impart not merely academic information, but how to live a complete life is, according to me, the purpose of education.

The only thing I have not been able to provide our boys with is science, owing to the enormous expense it would entail, which in a poor country like ours, is difficult to meet. I have not yet been able to arrange for it. Our students and I hope that some day it will be possible for me to fill up that deficiency.

This is the idea which I have in my mind and in spite of my lack of means, my poor resources, I have done something. Those who have been able to visit our institution can tell you how we have been helping the villages. It is not only for providing needed relief to the villages but also for the educational value of the work itself that children should be trained in the heart of such activities. The villages are the cradles of life and if we cannot give it what is due to it, then we commit suicide. Modern civilization is doing it, depriving the villages of life-stuff and draining away everything from the villages to the pampered towns. Because I believe in this, I have brought my students around this village work which we have started in order to give them the proper training for helping the villagers. I think this is, in short, the idea which I have in mind in my school.

1931

INTERNATIONAL GOODWILL

I WISH TO thank you for your words of welcome and for your approval of my work. I have been requested to speak a few words about international goodwill, but as this subject is so obviously controversial I hesitate to deal with it. I wish you could have had someone else more competent to deal with it.

One thing which I have realized in the East is that it is rather difficult in the Western Continent to cultivate the international mind. There are certain obstacles in the way which are militating against it. There is the spirit of individualism which has been so much raised by your culture in the West. Then it is apparent also that you have got here politics, and such politics as create differences between nations which are the cause of so much of the spirit of fighting and contention, making peace difficult to attain. We have also the same spirit of egotism in the people in the East, but I believe there is more community of interests there than excessive individualism.

It was during my voyage to America, I suppose, in 1916, that nationalism was first presented to me in its true light. When I came to Japan I had a chance of observing something that deeply hurt my mind. I saw the trophies won from the Chinese people being exhibited there. It was just after China had been humiliated by the Japanese people. It struck me as vulgar and vain-glorious that these people should forget everything and show this spirit of bragging. It was almost childish that a self-respecting nation should indulge in such a thing. It came to me very strongly owing to the fact that naturally the Japanese are very courteous and take an immense amount of trouble to make life beautiful and poetical. Because of this intense nationalism in abstract form, humanity is obscured, and that is why the Japanese did not see the shame of indulging in such a display. I feel that this nationalism smothers the higher spirit of man which you often find in the individual.

I am not competent to deal with international relationships between different countries, but, as I have said, your politicians really represent the spirit of aggressiveness which leads towards separateness. I know you are trying to do something to rectify the mischief through the League of Nations, but the nations are not represented by their idealists but only by their politicians. I do not think it is right that the nations should be represented by their politicians in a work which has for its object peace all through Europe. To my mind it is like a band of robbers being asked to organize the police department. (Laughter and applause).

What I have in my own mind is to try to create an atmosphere of mutual sympathy in my own institution. Amongst my own students I have done my best to create that atmosphere. This institution is outside political entanglements, and it is the one institution in which the students are natural to those visitors who come from the West or from other Eastern countries.

I have attempted to create this atmosphere in co-operation with some of the great men from Europe. When travelling through European countries, I

sent out my appeal to some of the great scholars. My plan was not merely to teach my scholars, but to work so as to create an atmosphere of cultural co-operation. Many from the West responded to my invitation. I had great scholars from France, from Germany, from Czechoslovakia, from Italy, from Norway and from other countries, and we have had help from Englishmen and Americans.

I have also had great help in my parallel work, which is my village reconstruction work. We have had students from all parts of the world, as well as from other provinces besides Bengal in my own country. This is the kind of practical work which I am trying to do, and even in the midst of this great cyclone of political restlessness in my country I do hope that institutions of this nature will be able to spread their influence to these shores.

It is to counteract this evil of separateness and to have a free channel of communication in a full spirit of sympathy and co-operation that I have dreamed of a day when you in England would come to us, not merely as members of the ruling class, or members of a bureaucracy, but in a detached manner, spreading human love among the people.

[1931]

LECTURES IN IRAN AND IRAQ

I 'SALUTATION TO THE SPIRIT OF PERSIA'

THE SPRINGTIME is hospitable. Her birds in their music, her flowers in their fragrance speak a language which is universal needing no translation to explain them. They make no discrimination in favour of their own land of origin, and their call of beauty which is God's own voice of love comes direct to my heart even though I am a traveller from a far away shore.

The poet also represents the eternal springtime of hospitality. His message is in his music which invokes the harmony of perfection for all humanity, his invitation is to the comradeship in a festival of love's union.

Persia's introduction came to me when I was a boy. It was that of the ideal Persia, the Persia of the poet, the Persia which sends her welcome in songs to strangers across all barriers of geography.

My father was a great scholar. He was intoxicated with Hafiz verses. When I was a boy I often used to listen to his recitation of those poems, and he translated them to me with a fervour of enjoyment that touched my heart.

The vision of Persia was invoked in my imagination by the voice of your own poets, who brought to my mind's sky the breath of your spring breeze with the enchantment of its blossoming roses and nightingales' songs. My arrival in your land today is therefore a continuation of the same enchantment and I am glad to mingle my voice with the rejoicing of life which has broken out in the air of your beautiful country fragrant with the perfume of orange blossoms.

It brings to my mind once again how my father to the end of his days derived deep consolation from your poets' songs assimilating them in his devotional life.

It is fortunate for me that I am able to come to lay my thankful thoughts to the shrines of your great poets. I wish it could have been done on this auspicious occasion in a poet's own manner. But unfortunately I feel like a specimen bird in a museum showcase where the rigid wings are unable to display their dance of a colourful life. My voice is muffled in an alien language, which cannot rhythmically respond to my muse. And therefore the true token of my reverent gratitude I offer in unuttered words to the undying memory of your poets and my salutation to the immortal spirit of Persia in which were cradled and in which still live the spirits of those singers.

17 April 1932

II 'THESE TWO LANDS SHOULD MEET IN LOVE'

Reply to the Welcome by the Indians of Siraj

IT IS PROPER that you should feel just as proud of the country which you have made your home for the present, as for your own land of birth. In your lives these two lands should meet in love and join in a common quest of truth. It

rests upon you to justify the fair name of your country, to attract your friends here to whatever is worthy and enduring in India by the example of your personal lives. In China and Japan, the different countries of the world wherever I have met Indians, the same thought of the great responsibility that rests upon them has come to my mind. In China our people have had to act against the interest of their hosts—I cannot tell you how much it pains me to think of this. We must follow the traditions of our olden days when India sent to her neighbouring countries messengers of love. However meagre our individual powers may be, we cannot spare ourselves in contributing to this ideal which our great ancestors have left for us. Be true to India, and true to Iran, serve humanity which comprehends the welfare of both.

19 April 1932

III TO THE ARMENIANS

Friends,

I thank you from the depths of my heart for your warm welcome. I feel that you are one with me in fellowship and share with me the belief that humanity is one, that differences of race and religion cannot stand in the way of our common pursuit of truth and love.

Friends, I have come here to this great land with that faith in man which is sorely needed in this strife-ridden tired world of today. Risking the strain of a difficult journey, in my old age, I have come here to seek new confirmation of my faith in the linked destiny of man. And I am thrilled by what I have seen and felt in this country which under a great monarch, one of the greatest men of this age, has already achieved. Iran today has not only proved the majesty of its own soul but shed the luster of its glory far and wide inspiring humanity with a new vision of fulfilment. Asia is awake today, she is once more now to offer her spiritual gift to the world, the message of brotherhood, of freedom, of federation in the task of establishing peace and goodwill.

I know that you of the Armenian community too now share the era of freedom and well-being which is in this land and that you feel an urge to contribute to this country the fruits of your own unique culture. Your community has its own particular genius for civilization with which you must enrich the country where you have gained freedom, hospitality and fellowship. Together with your friends, the people of this country of which you form a part, you must joyously set to work in leading this country onward towards perfection. This great land has won my heart as it surely has won yours, and it is a happy occasion for me to share with you the inspiration of creative enthusiasm which fills the atmosphere of this country today.

IV REPLY TO THE WELCOME BY THE ISPHAHAN MUNICIPALITY

FIRST OF ALL let me express my gratitude for the hearty welcome you have accorded to me and then let me go on and offer you an explanation which I owe to you.

The question may naturally come to your mind as to the object of my visit to your country. I take this opportunity to let you know my secret.

There was a time on olden days when the Emperors of Nations used to invite poets and wise men from other lands. Now that custom is no longer there. The modern statesman at the head of the political machinery has very little concern for culture. His connection with other countries is mostly guided by diplomacy upon which human considerations dare not infringe.

I have had my invitation as a poet and a thinker from different people of Europe and of the Orient. But I could never imagine that such invitation would come to me from those who are at the helm of administration, the kings and rulers of nations. Yet unusual though it is, this rare privilege has come to me. It was a day of great surprise and joy for me when I heard from my friend Dinshaw that an invitation was coming to me from His Imperial Majesty, Reza Shah Pahlevi, King of Persia.

This is in keeping with the tradition of the East when the Emperors represented the humanity of their nation and accepted their duty to establish communication with foreign lands. The revival of this spirit in modern Iran has given me a new hope for Asia, and you can well understand that I accepted with delight the gracious invitation from your monarch.

We, poets, thrive upon the sympathy and approbation of our fellow beings. Let me confess to you that I have no hankering for honour. I consider honour to be fit for the dead, who have done their work and earned their grand memorial stones. Our homage is to their eternal spirit which beckons to us afar. But love is for the living—who need warm fellowship which inspires them to progressive efforts and worthy achievements. My work is to arouse your joy in things of beauty, and I claim your love through which my voice may reach your heart.

We speak with the multitude as one of them, not from the formal aloofness of a preacher or teacher who affords you moral guidance. The altitude of a public platform is not for us poets. I wish I could sit in your midst and open the doors of your heart by the magic of rhythmic utterances. And then I could gather my dues from you in words of love if I have been successful in moving your hearts with my music. We poets manifest through our songs the simple and perennial truths of this life and your confirmation reaches us when you share them with us and are glad.

India's poet has come to Iran with this burden of a joyous song. I sing to the new humanity, today, of the dawn which has appeared in the horizon, and touched the Orient with a golden promise. Through your great King a glorious renewal of your country's life has begun. There is in the atmosphere the stir of joyous activity. I see in your faces the hopes of a magnanimous future. I welcome this renascence in Iran, and carry in my heart the conviction that it will spread all over Asia. Humanity, in the West and the East, suffers acutely from a pessimism born of spiritual apathy. We must break through it and offer once again to the whole world the message of the East, the message of freedom and love which comprehends the welfare of all races and peoples.

Before I leave let me offer to you the love of a wayfaring poet, my grateful appreciation of the delightful days spent in your midst in this city of great beauty. My heart is laden with the memory of your warm friendliness which has made my stay here so happy and fruitful and brought me so near to your heart.

27 April 1932

V AT TEHRAN

THE DIFFERENT races of Asia will no doubt have to solve their own national problems alone according to their own temperament and needs, but the torches held up on their path of progress will send their beckoning lights to each other thus creating a comradeship of culture, a brotherhood of path-seekers. We remain obscure like dark stars when we are inarticulate. When our national genius is active in trimming its lamps and lighting up its surroundings, the illumination it produces spreads a bond of minds far and wide, proving that man is one in spirit.

Before I conclude let me tell you what has been the strongest attraction that has brought me to your country not heeding my physical infirmity and the risks of a difficult journey. In the East we bend our heads before all that is humanly great and not merely what is mechanically perfect. We hail him as great who conquers circumstances because he has conquered himself. In other words we are worshippers of personality. Even in my own corner of India I seemed to have felt the glamour of the greatness of the present ruler of Persia revealing to my mind a vision of a new morning at the verge of a distant skyline. We were sure that a masterful man, a builder of the destiny of a nation has at last appeared in our neighbourhood.

5 May 1932

VI ADDRESS AT THE TEHRAN LITERARY SOCIETY

Friends,

I thank you for this invitation from the literary club of Teheran. It is natural that I the poet from India should find my place in your midst. Let me hope that you do not expect a regular speech from me, formal and decorous, that you agree with me that it is as absurd to make a poet deliver speeches as to use a flute for a fishing rod or a fencing stick. I am reminded of a similar occasion in China, when the literary people of Peking invited me to a picturesque garden on the hill and after lunch was over asked me to tell them about my ideas on art and literature. I spoke simply sitting in their midst, I was not condemned to be banished to a high platform aloof form my listeners. My place is with you, and not above you, so that I wish today also I could sit with you on the same level in this beautiful garden, and tell you what is in my heart.

It is not at all easy to define fundamental facts of existence such as art is. It is as indefinable as life itself. We only know that the spirit of life that manifests itself in a rose gives a definitely concrete form and character to an impulse which is indefinite and abstract. It has no other ulterior purpose than

to fashion a unique form from elements that are amorphous like those of carbon, nitrogen, hydrogen and others having no resemblance whatever to their final result. But this form of a rose is not important in itself, the form which is a limited fact that can be measured and analysed. It is a mysterious dynamic quality imported to it that helps to make the rose transcend all its immediate facts. In this it is not only a thing but it is a thing which has its significance of beauty inexplicable and measureless. A value has been given to it and not merely a substance. This value, this ineffable quality of delightfulness is maintained by a perpetual rhythm which creates a synchronous rhythm in our own consciousness.

The meaning of art is like that of life itself. Its inner impulse offers its ultimate explanation only in its outer manifestations. That they have come into being like a rose, like a star and have compelled our recognition of them as an inevitable expression of reality is enough. Like life art has its expressions that are dynamic, they constantly give an impetus to our minds and create ripples of various patterns in them which we call emotions. These are artistic emotions, being pure and having no consequence in life beyond their activities in our imagination. Art like life reveals in a rhythmic play of appearances for its own sake.

Before I had come to you, possibly some of you had heard of me, read my writings and admired them. In fact, you had already been acquainted with that aspect of mine which was most significant. Yet when you heard that I was coming to your country an expectation must have been aroused in you which gave you an eagerness of delight. But what is the reason? It must be this that a *knowledge* about myself was not enough but an *image* of me was needed for your complete satisfaction. By that nothing could be added in your mind to all the important factors about myself; only the several ideas about a poet of my name that you already had possessed are going to be focussed in a centre and formed into a definite image of reality. This image is not absolutely similar in all your minds and its emotional reactions are also varied according to your temperaments. But its unique definiteness gives satisfaction to your faculty of imagination which seeks to realize its visions in completeness. After the sight of me the picture that is impressed in your mind is an inner work of art, it is a mental image that has a living character.

But of what use is this image of a poet to you? If I were an engineer or a politician you could fix in your memory my figure with an association of some immediate usefulness such as building of bridges or carrying on diplomatic missions. But the image of a poet can have no appeal of utility in your mind.

In fact, all true images that are vivid give us a disinterested satisfaction even if their biographical associations have no importance. The sense of reality which is pure because detached from facts that either compel our recognition for urgent purposes of life or are overlooked because of their apparent insignificance, is delightful. In our storehouse of imagination we have such innumerable images of all that have been significant to us for their own sake, that have added wealth to our consciousness, making our life richer

for us, even when they are mingled with the memory of sorrows and sufferings. In fact, these are the materials out of which our life is truly built up—the life of ideal reality. The images which have found their permanence in our minds through the selective process of life, in other words which are most real for us give us our individuality of character. Human art is also busy creating images of ideal reality; our history reveals its character by producing these images and making its choice from them for its treasure of undying worth.

This world is a world of images. The clouds, the skies, the mountains and rivers are part of a common being to which we belong. The trees stand silently around giving us the delight of an intimate companionship, we enjoy the pageantry of leaves and flowers and fruits, the colours and forms in which they abound. We enjoy them because they are not vague, they are real and delightful to us. Because they have some quality of harmony which we call beauty, which makes their reality impressively inevitable and immediate to our minds. We take joy in the springtime blossoming of new life not for any virtue which we know as usefulness but simply because through a fulness of reality it rouses response of reality within us. It delights us by the sheer fact of its existence which is co-extensive with ours.

I had some knowledge of Persia even before my coming. I had read something of your history and geography, and formed some idea of your people and your country. My imagination was aroused through your great poets whose call had come to me even though I had no direct access to them. I used to dream of a Persia where *bulbuls* made love to the roses, where in dreamland gardens poets sat round their wine cups and invoked visions of ineffable meaning. But now that I have come to your country my dream has been formed into a concrete image finding its permanent place in the inner chamber of my experience. It is a definite gain added to the store of all my things of beauty that are joy for ever. I have visited Saadi's tomb; I have sat beside the resting place of Hafiz and intimately felt his touch in the glimmering green of your woodlands, in blossoming roses. The morning sun coming through the iron lattice work wrote its shadow scripts over his tomb; it was the same sun that lighted up the face of his beloved centuries ago. It fell upon my forehead with the memory of an eternal love episode in which we all seemed to have taken part. The past age of Persia lent the old world perfume of its own sunny hours of spring to the morning of that day and the silent voice of your ancient poet filled the silence in the heart of the poet of Modern India. Altogether it was an image which waited for its perfection in my mind since the far-off days when I was a boy and listened from my father to the cadenced music of your great poet.

Every individual has something of a poet within his heart seeking fulfilment through experiences which give a sense of ultimate reality. Man is glad because the sky is blue, because water flows and flowers blossom; not because they are useful and profitable like cheque books and motor cars, but because they are what they are. Our gift of imagination is satisfied through them, they are real to us though we cannot explain them.

God as poet inspires us—the poet within our hearts. In his sunrises and sunsets, green grass and living water he speaks to us as a comrade seeking our response in joy. And I am sure he is glad as a mortal poet is when we enjoy his creations. His great work is to delight our heart, not to convince us of the usefulness of things.

I have always felt that when I do useful work for my fellow beings God praises me, but when I sing to them I win his love. The world of utility we must recognize, its laws we must understand. If we fail to do so we shall be punished. But the world of beauty waits and waits; and even if we pass them heedlessly by the roses will smile, and be beautiful, and wait silently for our auspicious recognition. We are not punished if we callously ignore the ceaseless service of love which is in this universe. Therefore when we enter the heart of existence through love, the Master Poet is happy. He has given us freedom to be apathetic, to accept his creations or to reject them. When the great moment arrives, when our sensitive mind is moved by the fulness of reality, the music which flows from his infinite love reaches us, and our deepest purpose of being is fulfilled.

And then we also come out with our gifts of love, with our creations of beauty which we offer to him for his delight. When I saw your great ruins, Persepolis, your great architecture in Isfahan, your paintings and frescoes I felt that this was the homage of humanity to the Great Poet; the answer of man to God's call of love.

Poets and artists seem to bring their greatest gifts, and ask: 'Art thou satisfied, my Master? Thou hast made us partners in thy joy, pouring thy gifts of love upon us; now we have come to offer thee our best from the depths of our own love for thee.'

And the answer comes from Him to us, from our Master who is also our Friend: 'I have used my power for millions of years in fixing the foundation of this world, burned it in fire, hammered it with earthquakes. After ages of toil came the first flower, the birds sang, life appeared on earth—then was my dream fulfilled. And yet I waited. My joy sought the confirmation of your delight, the answering creations of your love.'

His world of beauty surrounds us, our life is his gift of love. The play of love begins—*lila* as we call it in India—now is to be the union of our human civilization of beauty with God's own world of creation, and be blessed.

My friends, let us not bring discord into this beautiful world, something which is perverse and disharmonious with creation. Roses and nightingales, sunshine and green foliage, they are tuning up the harp of creation—let us join with them. Let us not be greedy, ugly and destructive, ruled by passions which belie our nature. It has gone on too long, this desecration of our sacred world, which bears the touch of God's own hand. Do you not see how man is creating suffering, tightening the bonds of slavery on weaker nations, exploiting hospitality and kindness for cruel diplomacy? Do these harmonise with starlight, and wide fields, the call of eternity which comes from far horizons? Our deeds are an insult and untold injury to the world fashioned by our

Master, and we have to bow our heads in shame for what man has done to man.

God wishes man to manifest his greatness. Science has entered nature's store-house and is successfully utilising the wealth of its resources. For that we have to be proud. But what have we done to the world of beauty? Have we been equally successful in exploring its inner significance and making accessible to all its endless wealth of delight, fertilising the toil-hardened desert of destitution? No, on the contrary—the more we add to our machines, and our mechanisms of utility, the more we are being alienated from the eternal world of truth and beauty. We lose our heads over our mechanical achievement, we miss our right to be happy. We have learnt to tyrannize and destroy. We have failed to win our freedom by surrendering to love.

This, my friends, is all I have to say to you, I who belong to the brotherhood of a useless tribe called poets. You must use your wisdom in mastering mechanical power, there you have a great field of work. But let me remind you of your responsibility in the human world of love. I claim no right to advise you, to speak from a higher platform, but I claim a corner in your hidden heart where I can talk to you as a friend. If I am fortunate you will receive me there and recognize me as one who seeks to fulfil God's own dream of love.

9 May 1932

VII MY VISIT TO PERSIA

Persia has been a great inspiration to me. The whole country under the powerful statesmanship of her great King Reza Shah Pahlevi is marching on ahead very fast. Persia is being unified; her baffling customs and superstitions ruthlessly eliminated; her educational and social foundations are being securely established on a sane healthy nationalism which is in harmony with the modern age. As an Indian it gave me great pleasure to see with my own eyes what a people can achieve under the stress of freedom, how the enthusiasm of nation-building can radically change conditions which are the result of age-long accumulated inertia and dependence on others.

The problem in India is more complicated but what I say to our Government is that they should leave us alone to our destiny and let us solve our own problems in the light of experiment and efforts and necessary suffering. We need the wisdom born of experience and initiative, and must face reality in our own way so that we may exploit the full potentialities of our people.

When others talk of our communal conflicts, linguistic differences and various social disharmonies they conveniently forget that Europe also, even a short time ago, was in no better plight and yet she did not unmanfully accept her limitations as inevitable; she has struggled through her dark periods at immense sufferings and sacrifices which have been worthily rewarded by access to a people's eternal right to self-rule. Spanish Inquisitions, witch-burning, Catholic and Protestant warfares, anti-scientific campaigns and fanaticism—you can go on adding to such unenviable activities of Europe till

you come to the Great War when science and modernism only helped to intensify the savagery of fratricidal combat.

Let the people of Asia profit by the lessons which their brothers in the West have to teach us. Truth and freedom are for all, and we shall be proud to accept the gifts of modern Western Science adapting them to the needs of our national genius, our special traditions and circumstances. India is on her path to self-realization; she cannot afford to waste her priceless spiritual and intellectual resources in enforced emulation of ready-made ideals from outside; she must evolve her own civilization unhampered by her dead past or her modern political servitude. My visit to Persia has given me faith in the power of the Eastern peoples to assert themselves and quickly find their way to a united manifestation of their undying heritage in spite of conflict and difficult economic circumstance.

23 May 1932

VIII REPLY TO THE WELCOME BY THE EMPEROR OF IRAN

I HEARTILY THANK your Majesty for the kind invitation to your kingdom and the hospitality graciously offered to me tonight.

Not being a man of any political importance, not having any significant place in the confederacy of nations that are swaying the material destiny of the present-day world I might have considered such an honour as ill-fitted to a person like myself. But I am certain that it is meant for the cause I espouse and the vocation that I claim to be mine own. And therefore I must never shrink from it in false modesty but congratulate one of the modern rulers of me and shapers of history for the recognition he has offered to a member of the fellowship of poets whose mission it is to light lamps along the unending path of human culture. I cannot help rejoicing at the fact that in spite of an insistent preoccupation of utilitarian urgency of this machine-driven age a man of letters finds his welcome in this distracted world for any service he may have rendered to humanity in her all but repressed desire for spiritual self-realization.

In ancient Asia the men whose function was to make human mind fertile with living wealth of beauty and noble aspiration received their highest rewards from the monarchs not merely in a spirit of patronage but that of a high responsibility and cultured appreciation. I am sure that this individual fact of a poet belonging to a distant corner of the earth and speaking a different language finding his seat of welcome at your Majesty's table this evening is not a mere accident but has a deeper historical significance. It is a generous gesture of the national self-respect of a renascent Asia, its expression of the intellectual hospitality to all manifestations that transcend temporal standard and indicate our path to inner perfection. Human civilization has crossed the boundaries of racial and national segregation. We are today to build the future of man on an honest understanding of our varied racial personality which gives richness to life, on tolerance and sympathy and co-operation in the great task of liberating the human mind from the dark forces

of unreason and mutual distrust of homicidal pride of sect and lust of gain. I pray that Iraq may realize this great responsibility of a coming civilization.

Iraq, the land where great historical ages have mingled their glories, lying in the central zone of traffic between West and East may rightly hope to become one of the living links of a coming federation of the peoples of the world. With her vision of far-away beckoning horizons, her glittering atmosphere and the vast voice of her sky, her twin great rivers flowing down through shining centuries of splendour, let her win her right to a boundless freedom in a world of greatness and proclaim under her high-vaulted heavens the majesty of the spirit of man which is the sacred shrine of the spirit of God.

At the conclusion let me read the verse which I have specially written for the occasion and which may be translated thus—

The night has ended.
Put out the light of the lamp
of thine own narrow dark corner
smudged with smoke,
the great Morning which is for all
appears in the East.
Let its light reveal us to each other
who walk on the same path
of pilgrimage.

25 May 1932

IX ADDRESS TO THE COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

LET ME OFFER my heartiest thanks to His Majesty King Faisal who has graciously invited me to his kingdom enabling me personally to come in touch with the great and ancient civilization of Iraq.

It is a real inspiration to me to be present here at this moment when this old nation is being born anew and the ferment of creative life is shaping its culture towards a glorious fulfilment of freedom rich in the mystery of self-expression. I feel herein the atmosphere of stimulus of youth which stirs the continent of Asia today with the urge of a new age of achievement.

Unfortunately, as you know, my age and health make it difficult for me to cross the barriers of distance and my habits of a sequestered life; and, therefore, it is physically impossible for me to fulfil your expectations, to do much in return of your welcome which is so over-whelming in its kindness.

I am told that this invitation today has been extended to me chiefly on behalf of the literary circles of Baghdad. It is in the fitness of things that the first public reception should be given me by the Community of writers to which I am proud to belong. It fills my heart with delight to know that I am already familiar to you through my works, some of which have been translated into your language, and have won their home in your hearts. This proves, once more, that in the realm of literature there is no distinction of races, that our

ideas can freely meet and mingle and build together the vision of a perfection which comprehends the good of the Eternal Man.

Human history has been cruel to man. The greed of the strong has spread its meshes over the weaker races, injuring and exploiting them to feed its own unholy appetite. Humanity is torn by suffering and suspicion, by a disharmony which has wrought havoc in the very depths of our life on earth. It is for us of the Brotherhood of Letters, to rescue humanity from this misery of unnatural relationship, to lift the peoples of different countries to a higher altitude of being. To whichever land we may belong, this must be our common mission on this plane of united effort, to achieve goodwill between man and man, establish a secure foundation of fellowship which will save humanity from suicidal war and the savagery of fanatical superstitions.

We must usher in the age of reason, of co-operation, of a generous reciprocity of cultures which will reveal the richness of our common humanity.

With this fervent desire in my heart, my friends, I have come to your midst. Let me unburden my heart of this secret which has been at the bottom of my present visit to your country.

I have come to appeal to you, my brothers, to join hands with us in fighting the menace of mutual suspicion, of diplomatic double-dealing which tears out the heart of the civic life of humanity today. In the most glorious period of your history, Arabia dominated over half the world, East and West, and even now her sway over India is living in our spiritual and intellectual life through the vast population of Mahomedans we have in our midst. Let your voice reach us once again across the Arabian Sea carrying its majesty of a universal ideal; send us once more your men of faith who will bring together our different communities under the banner of fellowship, of love which admits no difference of race or religion.

In the name of all that is sacred and eternal in Man, in the name of your great Prophet and for the sake of the reputation of your great Religion, I appeal to you to advocate the cause of human fellowship, the tolerance of different creeds and customs and sympathetic neighbourliness necessary for civilized life of co-operation. Our religions have assumed a fratricidal ferocity of barbarism rending the heart of India, poisoning her racial memory and thwarting her progress towards freedom. Let your poets and thinkers, whose words soar above all prejudices and passions bred of dark unreason, help us to bring my unfortunate country to a sober state of life, to sane mentality that knows how to pursue its own path of welfare and save itself from an utter moral devastation. Let me remind you, my brothers, that a mere success in fulfilling the political and economic needs of one's own immediate surroundings is not enough for the responsibility of national self-expression; but your voice must transcend the limits of your own time and country so that your judgment for the moral cause of humanity must find a great utterance when the occasion comes, as has become urgent today in India, where your co-worshippers at the shrine of God are waiting for your guidance.

May 1932

ASIA'S RESPONSE TO THE CALL OF THE NEW AGE

MAN THE GREAT appears in the drama of human history from age to age choosing different lands of birth. For many centuries man's creative manifestation had the continent of Asia for its stage, revealing a manifold wealth of civilization. Today the luminous expression of the human personality is in the great continents of the West. Often we try to dwarf its reputation by labelling it as materialistic; but no race can build the heights of greatness on the quicksands of unspirituality. The pure materialist is a pure barbarian drifting in a fortuitous world of chance and circumstance which holds no abiding principles and can yield no permanent foundation. Scientific truths can be won only by those who can give full value to them in ardent faith. This faith is spiritual, this power of unflinching devotion to truth. The Western nations have conquered truth by spiritual endeavour that frees our mind from all intellectual delusions and it is this power which sustains their triumphant position in the world today.

With the diminishing vigour of our physical body its expressions grow more and more mechanical. With the choking up of the channels of her living efforts and aspiration the creative life of Asia languished, dead custom invaded her daily existence, religion and art hardened into unchanging tradition that checked all freedom of thought. This lack of confidence in reason and right relationship with the world of reality is materialistic; it is this which reduces man to slavery and destitution.

On the other hand, the signs of imminent danger which appear today in the Western civilization are due to the same reason. Scientific intelligence and power have made it masterful, rich in certain gifts of truth. But when the relationship between man and truth is contaminated then truth itself comes round and takes revenge. Europe has made science the vehicle of her greed and has hurt the very spirit of science which is disinterested and high above all clamour of profit-hunting. When excess of passion in any form becomes the principal motive power in man's nature then he is wire-pulled by it like a mechanical doll and is powerless to check his blind movements even when urged by reason. Such uncontrollable convulsive spasms of greed or of anger, of jealousy or of suspicion are truly materialistic, however intelligent may be their method and means. The reason of this degradation is not in the use of machinery itself, it lies in spiritual lacunae, in emergence of primitive barbarism in some civilized form. When a free lunatic hurts himself, then it is not the external freedom which is the cause of his hurt but lunacy itself, and if he is a skilful one his danger is all the more fatal.

When I was young, I read with deep pleasure the literature of the West; and my acquaintance with the mind that has the intellectual honesty revealed by the West in her science moved me to profound veneration for its great exponents. Today through this world-wide pursuit of truth in science and

other high forms of culture the Eternal Man finds its manifestation. It was to know this great humanity, the ever-awake spirit of Man that one day I took leave of my home for a far away pilgrimage to Europe in the year 1912.

That journey I consider to be auspicious. Because we are Asiatics, a protest against Europe seems to run in our blood. Since the time that its pirates of land and sea have gone out to exploit the weaker continents, from the 17th century onward, the European races have irretrievably damaged their own reputation in the East. But coming to Europe I first discovered that the simple humanity of the peoples and the organized humanity of nations do not belong to the same category. Just as the natural body and the heavily armoured body are different in their attitude and manner; the former expressing the character of life, the latter imitating the machine. I found that there is no difficulty in accepting the natural man as one's own. The humanity that is expressed in him is attractive, is worthy of respect. I loved him, I hailed him in regard and our feelings were reciprocal. It is rare good fortune to be able to know the Eternal Man amongst unknown humanity in a foreign country.

But for that very reason my mind was troubled. It was obvious to me that the peoples' character in the West is being constantly moulded by their passionate political preoccupation and a furious competition of diplomacy with their neighbours; and not only mechanization in their economic world but also in their own inner nature is growing fast. The sole fulfilment of a machine is in achievement of result which in its pursuit of success despises moral compunctions as foolishly out of place. This aspect of the West, darkly designing, is constantly turned towards Asia callously revealing to us its materialism, its tendencies that are mainly for exploitation of victims. I remember, recently in, Iraq a man of eminent position asked me, 'What do you think of the English?' I said, 'The best of them are among the best in humanity.' He smilingly asked, 'What about the next best?' I remained silent. There was a danger of intemperate language if I had tried to answer just then. In Asia the greater part of our business is with this next best. They are large in number, their influence is wide, the memory of their dealings with us lies deep in the minds of multitudes of our people. Their human dealings are not for us and gradually even for their own people they are growing rarer.

I came back home. Soon afterward began the Great War in Europe. Then it was found that the Western people were using science for devastation of the human world. The conflagration set by it has died down, but the embers are still glowing in fierceness. Never in the history of humanity has there been such an appalling orgy of evil. It is this which I call materialism, which gives rise to a moral inertia, that paralyses our will and intelligence even when we are aware of the fatal danger that threatens us.

In the meantime life in Asia has become restless and self-assertive. The reason is, in spite of the unremitting pressure of Europe she has completely lost her true hold upon Asia's mind. Once even when being exploited and beaten Asia acknowledged Europe as in every way superior to herself. Today from one end to the other of Asia there is no longer any feeling of respect for

Europe, and even fear in their mutual dealing is fast losing its force. It is impossible for Asia today to lower her prestige before Europe, because, of the latter's prestige nothing remains but military browbeating. Everywhere with a slight smile she is asking, 'But what of these who are the next best?'

Today we are born at the end of an epoch in the history of humanity. Perhaps in the drama of Europe the scene is being changed for the fifth act of the play. Signs of an awakening in Asia have slowly spread from one end of the horizon to the other. This glow of a new dawn above the eastern mountain ranges of humanity is indeed a great vision—it is a vision of freedom. Freedom, not only from external bondages, but from those of slumberous inaction and disbelief in one's inner power.

What I say is that if Asia is not fully awakened then there is no deliverance for Europe as well. The fatal arrow for Europe lies in the weakness of Asia. The heavy load of suspicion, hostility and hatred, of untruthful diplomacy and spying which Europe carries on her back is due to her grabbing for pieces and portions of the weak Asiatic continent. Rapidly grows the weight of her war armaments; having spread her marts of business far and wide, today at last in an unfathomable sea of wealth, her penury becomes evident.

Once I went out to eastern Asia to welcome there the birth of the new spirit of humanity. Then in the easternmost sky of Asia was fluttering the triumphant banner of Japan, encouraging new hope in the heart of Asia. I experienced joy, yet my mind was deeply disturbed. I realized that though Japan by mastering European science had found her national safety she at the same time had introduced for her future an element of grave danger that is sure to demoralize her international relationship. In Japan's blood has entered the poison of imperialism from the West; and her neighbours are wrought to a state of agonized apprehension. In history the favourable wind does not always blow in one direction. That day is certain to come when the debts due to the weak will have to be paid up to the last penny. Japan in her relation to others has not learnt the art of civilization, which heals and unites, she has trained her hands under Europe in the science that inflicts wounds with efficiency. This fatal cleverness will not spare the hand that wields it when the time comes at last.

The calamity to which I refer is tragic not merely because of its political consequences but for its cruel destruction of human possibilities. If the new age has indeed come to Asia then let Asia give voice to it in her own special idiom of civilization. If instead of that she imitates the roar of Europe, even if it be a lion's roar, yet it will sound pitifully unreal.

However, it cannot be ignored that the East is growing restlessly conscious of her own destiny which she is determined to save from Western encroachment. Just when Turkey was about to collapse there appeared Kemal Pasha. It was a fateful moment. The patched up parts of the Turkish Empire had been rent asunder by the impact of the world war, but this had indeed been a blessing in disguise. Under the guidance of a masterful personality it now became possible to establish securely, on a normal basis and in an efficient

modern manner the compact and reduced empire within narrower boundaries. The word 'Empire' means an unnatural expansion of girth gained by tying together with ropes and strings bodies which are not vitally related to each other. When in evil days these bonds get loosened, it becomes difficult indeed to save the units of this unnatural congregation from mutual buffetings. Turkey freed from the burden of bigness became really integrated. England had then planned her downfall by letting loose Greece upon her territory. On the political platform of England sat Lloyd George and Churchill in close conspiracy. In 1921 the European Allies met in conference in England. The proposal that was then made by Bakir Sami, the Turkish representative of Angora, was a willingness to curtail a great part of Turkey's political claims. But Greece doggedly stuck to her own ambitious plans down to the last limit, England supporting her from behind.

In this time of trouble Turkey made alliance with France. With Persia and Afghanistan too she had a good understanding. In the second part of her treaty with Afghanistan we find:

'The contracting parties recognize the emancipation of the nations of the East and confirm the fact of their unrestricted freedom, their right to be independent and to govern themselves in whatever manner they themselves choose.'

In the meantime continued the war between Greece and Turkey. Even now Angora repeatedly sent in vain proposals of peace to end bloodshed. At last all negotiations ended with the defeat of Greece. Under the dictatorship of Kemal Pasha was inaugurated a new era in the development of Turkish civilization with Angora as capital. This new Turkey acceded Europe's lessons in efficiency adjusting them to her own genius of civilization. Kemal Pasha said that Turkey must break through the dark dungeon of unreason belonging to ages that are dead. The Turkish Minister of Justice said, 'Mediaeval principles must give way to secular laws. We are creating a modern, civilized nation, and we desire to meet contemporary needs. We have the will to live, and nobody can prevent us.'

When after his victory in the war Kemal Pasha entered the city of Smyrna he convened a big public meeting and addressing the women, said, 'We have won undoubted victory in the war but that victory will be meaningless if you do not help us. Let the victory of education be yours, then you will be able to accomplish much more than we have done. Everything will be futile if you do not progress with steadfast mind and heart along the path of modern life. Everything will be futile if you do not accept the responsibility that has been placed upon you by scientific habits of living.'

This fact has been acknowledged in eastern Asia by Japan and in Asia's westernmost corner by Turkey: that we must be strictly honest in our relationship with the material world and must organize our life upon a rational basis. This is true, but let us not forget that there are other aspects of the problem for to consider. The sphere of Europe's success has long attracted our attention, but where Europe has failed is in the depths, at the very root, and so this has been

kept hidden from us. That greed of Europe which forced opium down China's throat does not die with the death of China; its poison is everyday entering into the vitals of Europe's own life. The supreme method of self-preservation is to establish honest dealings with the human world and not merely with the world of matter. Europe has ignored this truth, thus making all her problems dangerously involved. Japan in her blind imitation of western aggressiveness, has forgotten this eternal principle, but the eternal laws of universe will not forget. History is a record of sudden surprises which have overwhelmed nations too sure of their inviolable superiority to moral laws.

It is good to know clearly how western Asia is responding to the call of this new age. The time has not come yet for mature results on a big canvas of organized endeavour. Here and there signs and symptoms appear which do not compel attention, but the way of truth is to appear in the guise of the small. Asia has not yet swept off the clinging weeds of ancient habit which choke the currents of her national being but through various ferments in her social and economic life her psychology is being rapidly adjusted to a new order of civilization. All over Asia the cry has arisen that sectarian religion cannot be allowed to wreck the natural basis of community life, bringing dissensions where a common economic, social and historical background should preserve an inevitable continuity of co-operation. When during a farewell feast given to an Englishman of high official position in the Government of Palestine he said, 'Palestine is a Muhammadan country, and its government should, therefore, be in the hands of the Muhammandans, on condition that the Jewish and Christian minorities are represented in it,'—then Mufti Haji-el-Husaini of Jerusalem answered, 'For us it is an exclusively Arab, not a Muhammadan, question. During your sojourn in this country you have doubtless observed that here there are no distinctions between Muhammadan and Christian Arabs. We regard the Christians not as a minority, but as Arabs.' I know that unfortunately this catholicity of mind all people, rather, most people, do not possess, but it is a great event that these creative ideas are raising everywhere in Asia their banners of rebellious life.

Observe what is happening in another unknown corner. In Russian Turkestan the Soviet Government in a very short time has imparted new life to the desert-dwelling tribes of Asia. The reason for this rapid success is that at least on the part of the Government there is no obstacle of greed which would deliberately create factions amongst the masses in order to rifle their resources for unholy profiteering. The people have full scope to develop their native gifts and gain inspiration from the modern age. Small nations, disunited and scattered all over this desert area, have each been given the right to establish their own republican government. Moreover, arrangements for spreading education amongst them are rich and various. I have said before in separate context that in the vast empire of the Soviets comprising a large number of nations and races there is nowhere today any fight or discord between the different communities. During the imperialistic government of the Czar this was a matter of daily occurrence. The mental health which makes

it possible to maintain the purity of human relationships is a product of education matured in an atmosphere of freedom. Through the benefits of both education and freedom Asia's humanity today is striving to rescue itself from self-humiliation and the tyranny of circumstance. However intense may the pain and suffering of this initial stage of our struggle for freedom nothing can be more glorious than this effort, than this unstinted self-sacrifice for the achievement of human dignity. Through Asia's freedom the freedom of the whole world will be made safe. Let us not forget that imperialistic Europe today is herself entangled in the bondage which she has imposed upon alien peoples who are dragging her down with their weight of wretchedness.

When, in 1912, I went to Europe an English poet asked me, 'What is it that has specially brought you to this country?' I said, 'I have come to know the humanity of Europe.' The lamp of mind has been lighted in Europe as well as the lamp of life, therefore man is not obscured there, his self-revelation is ceaseless and spontaneous. The other day in Persia also I was asked the same question. I said, 'I have come to Persia to know the true Persian.' I could never hope to see him if in that country humanity had lain hidden in intellectual obscurity. I knew that the lamp already lit. Therefore, when the call came from Persia I felt eagerly ready to start on my pilgrimage.

1932

CAN SCIENCE BE HUMANIZED?

THERE IS NO meaning in such words as spiritualising the machine; we can spiritualise our own, being which makes use of the machine, just as there is nothing good or bad in our bodily organs, but the moral qualities that are in our mind. When the temptation is small our moral nature easily overcomes it, but when the bribe that is offered to our soul is too big we do not even realize that its dignity is offended. Today the profit that the machine brings to our door is too big and we do not hesitate to scramble for it even at the cost of our humanity. The shrinking of the man in us is concealed by the augmentation of things outside and we lack the time to grieve over the loss. We can only hope that science herself will help us to bring back sanity to the human world by lessening the opportunity to gamble with our fortune. The means that science has produced through which to gain access into Nature's storehouse is tremendously complex which only proves her own immaturity just as simplicity is wanting in the movements of a swimmer who is inexpert. It is this cumbersome complexity in the machinery which makes it not only unavailable to the majority of mankind but also compels us to centralise it in monster factories, uprooting the workers' life from its natural soil creating unhappiness. I do not see any other way to extricate us from these tangled evils except to wait for science to simplify our means of production and thus lessen the enormity of individual greed.

I believe that the social unrest prevalent today all over the world is owing to the anarchy of spirit in the modern civilization. What is called progress is the progress in the mechanical contrivances; it is in fact an indefinite extension of our physical limbs and organs which, owing to the enormous material advantage that it brings to us has tempted the modern man away from his inner realm of spiritual value and thus the balance is lost. The attainment of perfection in human relationship through the help of religion and cultivation of our social qualities occupied the most important place in our civilization up till now. But today our homes have dissolved into hotels, community life is stifled in the dense and dusty atmosphere of the office, man and woman are afraid of love, people clamour for their rights and forget their obligations and they value comfort more than happiness and spirit of display more than that of beauty.

Great civilizations in the East as well as in the West have flourished in the past because they produced food for the spirit of man for all time; they tried to build their life upon their faith in ideals, the faith that is creative. These great civilizations were at last run to death by men of the type of our precocious schoolboys of modern times, smart and superficially critical, worshippers of self, shrewd bargainers in the market of profit and power, efficient in their handling of the ephemeral who presume to buy human souls with their money and throw them into their dustbins when they have been sucked dry, and who,

eventually, driven by suicidal forces of passion, set their neighbours' houses on fire and are themselves enveloped by the flame.

It is some great ideal which creates great societies of men; it is some blind passion which breaks them to pieces. They thrive so long as they produce food for life; they perish when they burn up life in insatiate self gratification. We have been taught by our sages that it is Truth and not things which saves man from annihilation.

The reward of truth is peace, the reward of truth is happiness. People suffer from the upsetting of equilibrium when power is there and no inner truth to which it is related, like a motor car in motion whose driver is absent.

1933

RAMMOHUN ROY

RAMMOHUN ROY inaugurated the modern age in India. He was born at a time when our country, having a lost its link with the inmost truths of its being, struggled under a crushing load of unreason, in abject slavery to circumstance. In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition, and ceased to exercise our humanity. In this dark gloom of India's degeneration Rammohun rose up, a luminous star in the firmament of India's history, with prophetic purity of vision, and unconquerable heroism of soul. He shed radiance all over the land; he rescued us from the penury of self-oblivion. Through the dynamic power of his personality, his uncompromising freedom of the spirit, he vitalized our nations being with the urgency of creative endeavour, and launched it into the arduous adventure of realization. He is the great path-maker of this century who has removed ponderous obstacles that impeded our progress at every step, and initiated us into the present era of world-wide co-operation of humanity.

Rammohun belongs to the lineage of India's great seers who age after age have appeared in the arena of our history with the message of Eternal Man. India's special genius has been to acknowledge the divine in human affairs, to offer hospitality to all that is imperishable in human civilization, regardless of racial and national divergence. From the early dawn of our history it has been India's privilege and also its problem, as a host, to harmonize the diverse elements of humanity which have inevitably been brought to our midst, to synthetize contrasting cultures in the light of a comprehensive ideal. The stupendous structure of our social system with its intricate arrangement of caste testifies to the vigorous attempt made at an carly stage of human civilization to deal with the complexity of our problem, to relegate to every class of our peoples, however wide the cleavage between their levels of culture, a place in a cosmopolitan scheme of society. Rammohun's predecessors, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, and innumerable saints and seers of medieval India, carried on much further India's great attempt to evolve a human adjustment of peoples and races; they broke through barriers of social and religious exclusiveness and brought together India's different communities on the genuine basis of spiritual reality. Now that our out-worn social usages are yielding rapidly to the stress of an urgent call of unity, when rigid enclosures of caste and creed can no more obstruct the freedom of our fellowship, when India's spiritual need of faith and concord between her different peoples has become imperative and seems to have aroused a new stir of consciousness throughout the land, we must not forget that this emancipation of our manhood has been made possible by the indomitable personality of the great unifier, Rammohun Roy. He paved the path for this reassertion of India's inmost truth of being, her belief in the equality of man in the love of the

Supreme Person, who ever dwells in the hearts of all men and unites us in the bond of welfare.

Rammohun was the only person in his time, in the whole world of man, to realize completely the significance of the modern age. He knew that the ideal of human civilization does not lie in the isolation of independence, but in the brotherhood of interdependence of individuals as well as of nations in all spheres of thought and activity. He applied this principle of humanity with his extraordinary depth of scholarship and natural gift of intuition, to social, literary and religious affairs, never acknowledging limitations of circumstance, never deviating from his purpose lured by distractions of temporal excitement. His attempt was to establish our peoples on the full consciousness of their own cultural personality, to make them comprehend the reality of all that was unique and indestructible in their civilization, and simultaneously, to make them approach other civilizations in the spirit of sympathetic co-operation. With this view in his mind he tackled an amazingly wide range of social, cultural, and religious problems of our country, and through a long life spent in unflagging service to the cause of India's cultural reassertion, brought back the pure stream of India's philosophy to the futility of our immobile and unproductive national existence. In social ethics he was an uncompromising interpreter of the truths of human relationship, tireless in his crusade against social wrongs and superstition, generous in his co-operation with any reformer, both of this country and of outside, who came to our aid in a genuine spirit of comradeship. Unsparingly he devoted himself to the task of rescuing from the debris of India's decadence the true products of its civilization, and to make our people build on them, as the basis, the superstructure of an international culture. Deeply versed in Sanskrit, he revived classical studies, and while he imbued the Bengali literature and language with the rich atmosphere of our classical period, he opened its doors wide to the spirit of the age, offering access to new words from other languages, and to new ideas. To every sphere of our national existence he brought the sagacity of a comprehensive vision, the spirit of self-manifestation of the unique in the light of the universal.

Let me hope that in celebrating his centenary we shall take upon ourselves the task of revealing to our own and contemporaneous civilizations the multi-sided and perfectly balanced personality of this great man. We in this country, however, owe a special responsibility, not only of bringing to light his varied contributions to the modern age, but of proving our right of kinship with him by justifying his life, his maintaining in every realm of our nation's existence the high standard of truth which he set before us. Great men have been claimed by humanity by its persecution of them and wilful neglect. We evade our responsibility for those who are immeasurably superior to us by repudiating them. Rammohun suffered martyrdom in his time, and paid the price of his greatness. But out of his sufferings, his power of transmuting them to carry on further beneficent activities for the good of humanity, the modern age has gained an undying urge of life. If we fail him again in this day of our

nation-building, if we do not observe perfect equity of human relationship offering uncompromising fight to all forms and conventions, however ancient they may be in usage, which separate man and man, we shall be pitiful in our failure, and shamed for ever in the history of man. Our futility will be in the measure of the greatness of Rammohun Roy.

1933

'TO THE YOUTH OF HYDERABAD'

MY YOUNG FRIENDS

I have come to the time of my dismissal from life's workshop barred from further earning. My old age keeps me pensioner to my departed days; I am only allowed to live upon my past achievement. The thoughts that I have thought, the dreams that I have dreamed, gradually matured and came to the season of fruitage, till some of them shrivelled and died and some were ripe for reaping and were garnered.

I began my life of thinking and aspiration when the world in some of its aspects and temperament was different from what it is to-day. It was the fresh period of dew-washed dawn; the horizon radiant with hope, and the young adventurers of truth showed no sign of fatigue or wavering on their path of pilgrimage. We had our faith in what we considered as things of permanent value in human life; we believed in a principle of perfection which has its everlasting truth in a divine personality having an innermost bond of relationship with human spirit. I know that the sceptic age we are passing through is busily digging at the root of all things, developing a belief that the dead soil is the original source and not any mysterious life working within an invisible seed; that the ultimate meaning of man is the animal and spirit is matter. But we must be certain that an age of spiritual nihilism such as the present one, can never be lasting, that it is like the sun under eclipse carrying for the moment a sweeping shadow of doubt across its eternal normalcy of light.

To-day I am here to repeat what I have said before on different occasions, for I believe that by repeating we truly respect the ideas that come to us as precious for our own life and joysome as our gifts to others. We dare to repeat ourselves when we are over seventy, for long before this time we ought to have been able to discover what are those finds of ours that dust has not covered and use has not tarnished. I no longer believe in originality that must pose itself new to justify its name. I hope, if I am worthy of the reputation that fortunately has come to me, that I have spoken some words in my life that will bear repetition to my contemporaries and to listeners who will represent the future.

At the same time keep in your mind that the thoughts that do not become frayed by constant handling that do not tire us to insensitiveness are simple, they are ashamed to play acrobatic feats of cleverness. In other words they are not like the supercilious rockets that dare to make faces at the stars and only contribute ashes to the dust. But they are like our house-lamp with its eternal mystery of beneficent light tenderly watchful, made all the dearer by its daily familiarity.

Though I have confessed that I began my youth in a comparatively remote past from that of yours, do not imagine that I dwell in a time of dilapidated desolateness, that I am no longer modern. Old age has not its reliable witness in any back number of calendar but in the stagnation of spirit

that disclaims its own future. It is cynicism even of the most modern make which is truly senile, for it has lost its vision of the beyond, the deeper meaning of existence. The cleverness which is up to date seems to exult when saying that the doctrine of spirit has grown obsolete and our present-day education only relies upon external forces and material foundations. But I say over and over again that the impertinence of material dominion is extremely old; the revelation of spirit in Man is ever modern though born of an immemorial past. Occasionally it has its time of silence, it disappears from our view, so that its price has to be paid for winning it back. And a poet's mission is to attract the voice which is yet inaudible in the air; to inspire faith in the dream which is unfulfilled; to bring the earliest tidings of the unborn flower to a doubting world.

So many are there to-day who do not believe. They do not know that faith in a great future itself creates that future; that without faith you cannot recognize your opportunities. Prudent men and unbelievers have too often pulled down the shelters of man, but it is the eternal child, the dreamer, the man of simple faith, who has built up civilizations. This creative genius, as you will see in your own past history, had faith which acknowledged no limits and dared danger and death for the sake of immortality.

I have often been asked for messages and it ever troubles me. It is like asking the tree to talk and bird to lecture. As a poet it is for me to maintain only my instinct of happiness even when the gloom is on the sky and the land; the pulsation of light throbs in my own pulse when it vibrates in the unseen depth of the dark. I am here to offer you that unreasoning joy of mine and a hope for life's renewal which thrills in the roots of our being when the spring unloosens the coils of the winter before we come to know it.

Permit me, rather, to share your hope in the stirring of life over this land and I shall join in your rejoicing. I am not a philosopher: therefore keep for me room in your heart, not a seat on the public platform. I want to win your trust and love now that I am close to you, with the faith that is in me of a fruitful future, when your country rises and gives expression to its own spirit, a future in the glory of which we shall all share.

I hope that some profound dreamer will spring from your midst to sing a psalm of life everlasting and all-embracing love, and, therewith overcoming all differences bridge the chasm of passions which has been widening for centuries. Age after age, in Asia great souls have heartened the world with showers of grace and immense assurance, Asia is again waiting for such world spirits to come and carry on the work, not of fighting, not of profit-making, but for interlinking bonds of human relationship.

Intently I hope that the time is at hand when we shall once again be proud to belong to a continent which produces the light that radiates through the storm-clouds of trouble and illuminates life's pilgrim's path.

The organized power of the machine is ready to smite and devour us, from which we must be rescued by that living power of spirit which grows in strength, not through mere addition, but through comprehension. It is right

that we should borrow science from the West, her treasure of intellect, which is immense and whose superiority we must acknowledge. But it would be degradation on our part, and an insult to our ancestors, if we forget our own wealth of wisdom, which is of far greater value than a system that produces endless materials and a physical power that is always on the war path.

For the last century and a half, the cultured nations of the earth are rapidly giving up their faith in a spiritual perfection of life. Their doom is upon them, and it is daily growing evident that the terrific glow we see upon the western horizon is not the glow of sunrise, or of a new birth-fire, but is a conflagration of passion. Of that, only those who have lost their mind gazing at the sudden eruption of a flaming success, can be enamoured, as the victim is enamoured of the glittering serpent's eyes.

I say emphatically that we must accept truth when it comes from the West and not hesitate to render it our tribute of admiration. Unless we accept it our civilization will be one sided, it will remain stagnant. Science gives us the power of reason, enabling us to be actively conscious of the worth of our own ideals.

We have been in need of this discovery to lead us out of the obscurity of dead habit, and for that we must turn to the living mind of the West with gratefulness, never encouraging the cultivation of hatred against her. Moreover, the Western people also need our help, for our destinies are now intertwined.

No one nation to-day can progress, if the others are left outside its boundaries. Let us try to win recognition from the West with all that is best and not base in us, and think of her and deal with her, not in revenge or contempt, but with goodwill and understanding, in a spirit of mutual respect.

There was a time when Asia saved the world from barbarism. Then came the night, I do not know how. And when we were aroused from our stupor by the knocking at our gate, we were not prepared to receive Europe who came to us in her pride of strength and intellect. The West came, not to give of its best, or to seek for our best, but heartlessly to exploit us for the sake of material gain. And Europe overcame Asia not through our admiration for her freedom's message and service of humanity but overpowering greed and the racial pride that humiliates. We did Europe injustice because we did not meet her on equal terms. The result was the relationship of the superior and the inferior; and since then we have been imagining that we are destitute. We are still suffering from want of self-confidence. We are not aware of our own treasures.

Let us free ourselves from the meshes of self-abasement, the most deadly of all impositions from the West. Let us prove that we are not beggars. This is our responsibility. Recover from your own homes things that are of undying worth. Then you will be saved and will be able to save all humanity. Some of us, of the East, think that we should ever imitate the West. I do not believe in it. For imitation belongs to the dead mould; life never imitates, it assimilates. What the West has produced is for the West, being native to it. But we of the East cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament. We want to master the idiom which belongs to our own genius, the river-bed which naturally carries our own thought streams to the ocean of world culture.

You who are young do not need any props of text-book maxims, or pruning hooks of prohibition, for the guidance of your conscience. Your soul has its natural star, which carries hope for the unborn day of your country's future. I am here to sing the hymn of praise to youth, I who am your poet, the poet of the young.

You know that fairy tale—the eternal story of youth which is current in almost all parts of the world. It is about the beautiful princess taken captive by some cruel giant and the young prince who goes out to free her from the dungeon. Do you not remember when you heard it in your boyhood, how your blood was stirred, how you felt yourselves sitting out in the guise of that prince to rescue her back to freedom. To-day the human soul is lying captive in the dungeon of Giant Machine, and I ask you, my young princes, to light up the fire of enthusiasm in your hearts and rush to rescue the human soul from the tyranny of the relentless greed which keeps it chained.

There are some people, who are proud and wise and practical, who say that it is not in human nature to be generous, that men will always fight one another, that the strong will conquer the weak, and that there can be no real moral foundation for man's civilization. We cannot deny the facts of their assertion: the strong have power in the human world: but I refuse to accept this as a revelation of truth.

I bring to your mind those early days, when nature produced huge monsters. Whoever in those days could dare to believe that they were doomed to perish under their enormity of flesh? Then happened a miracle. All of a sudden, in the midst of that orgy, of bigness and physical strength, appeared Man, without weapons and without protection, naked, small and tender of skin. He discovered the full power of his intellect and stood up against the might of muscle with weapons shaped by his mind,and he held his own and survived.

But the true victory of man's life was not fulfilled even then. For to-day his descendents, half-brute and half-man, have risen up all over the world in terrible form, more devastating even than those pre-historic monsters who, at their worst, were frankly physical. This combination of brute and intellect has given rise to a terror which is stupid in its passion and yet cunning in its weapons; it is blindness made efficient, and, therefore, more destructive than all other forces in the world.

We in the East had once tried our best to muzzle the brute in man and to control its ferocity. But to-day the titanic forces of intellect have overwhelmed our belief in spiritual and moral power. Power in the animals was, at least, in harmony with life, but not so are bombs, poison gases, and murderous aeroplanes, the death dealing weapons supplied by science.

We should know this, that truth—any truth that man acquires, is for all. Money and property to a limited extent belong to individuals, but you must never allow truth to slave for your personal aggrandisement—which means selling God's blessings to make profit. Science also is truth. It has its own place, in the healing of the sick, in the giving of more food, more leisure for life. But

when with its help its votaries crush the weak, rob those who are asleep, exploit nature for impious ends, then this sacrilege of theirs will produce punishment and their own weapons will be turned against them as the signs are numerous to-day.

The great human societies are the creation not of profiteers, but of dreamers. It is not Carthage which lives through ages but Athens does. The millionaires who produce their bales of merchandise in outrageous quantities, have never built an alter to the eternal spirit of perfection. To-day it is they who are about to destroy the temples that others have built driving the spiritual man to a ragged vagabondage.

My young friends. I gaze across the distance of age at your young faces, beaming with intelligence and eager interest. I am approaching the shore of the sunset-land. You stand over there with the rising sun. My heart reaches out to your hearts and blesses them.

I envy you. When I was a boy, in the dusk of the waning night, we did not fully know to what a great age we had been born. The meaning of that age has become clear to-day. I believe there are individuals all over the world this moment who have heard its call.

What a delight it may be for you, and what a responsibility, this belonging to a period which is one of the greatest in the whole history of man, when all races have come close to each other. We realize the immense significance of this age dimly, in the light of a glowing fire of pain, and do not even fully know what form it is going to take.

The seed, in which life remains self-contained does not reveal its complete truth. Even when the sheath bursts, it is not known in what shape its life will manifest itself, what fruit the branches will bear.

In human history, the forces of creation oftenest work in the dark, but it is the privilege of man to give them direction, and thus to take part in the unfoldment of his own destiny. The sheath of the present age has burst. It lies in you, in each one of you, to give this new-born life the impulse of growth.

I ask you again what have you got, what out of your own house can you offer in homage to this new age? You must answer this question. Do you know your own mind? Your own culture? What is best and most permanent in your own history?You must at least know that before you can save yourselves from the greatest of insults, the insult of obscurity, of rejection. Bring out your light and add it to this great festival of lamps in world illumination.

I cannot, however, bring myself to believe that any nation in this earth can be great and yet be materialistic. I have a belief that no people in Asia can be wholly given to materialism. There is something in the blue expanse of its sky, in the radiance of its sun, in the silent depth of its night, in the varied wealth of its seasons, which somehow gives to us an understanding of the inner music of existence, and I am sure you are not deaf to it.

To be able to love material things, to clothe them with tender grace, and yet not be grossly attached to them, this is a great achievement. Providence expects that we should make this world our own, and not live in it as though

it were a rented tenement. We can only make it our own by some service, and that service is to lend it love and beauty from our soul. From your own experience you can see the difference between the beautiful, the tender, the hospitable; and the mechanically neat and monotonously useful.

Gross utility kills beauty. We have now all over the world a huge production of things, huge organizations, huge administrations of empire, obstructing the path of life. Civilization is waiting for a great consummation, for an expression of its soul in beauty. This must be our contribution to the world.

Deformity has already made its bed in your markets, it is fast encroaching upon the region of your heart, bribing with cheap lures your admiration. If you accept it is your permanent guest, and thus do violence to yourselves, then, indeed, in a generation or two, you will kill this great gift. What will remain? What will you offer humanity in return for your privilege to exist?

You say, 'We must make progress.' Why should there remain forever a gulf between progress and perfection? If you can make them one in beauty, you will reach the ultimate goal of reality.

It is your own mission to prove that love for the earth, and for the things of the earth, is possible without materialism, love without the vulgarity of avarice.

Let us develop the instinct that can grasp the secret of the rhythm of things,—not merely the secret of power which is in science, but the secret of expression. This is the divine secret which is ever taming the wild forces that are mere monstrous facts of the universe having no inner significance of truth.

I am tired and old. This is perhaps my last meeting with you. With all my heart I take this occasion to entreat you not to be turned away by the call of vulgar strength, of stupendous size, by the spirit of storage, by the multiplication of millions, without meaning and without end.

Cherish the ideal of perfection, and to that, relate all your work, all your movements. Then, though you love the material things of earth, they will not hurt you and you will bring heaven to earth and soul into things.

1933

'WOMEN'S PLACE IN THE WORLD'

THE PLANET WHICH rules my life is a planet of contradictions. I, who began my childhood behind a guarded seclusion of solitude developing a timid shyness in my nature, have always to navigate my career round the world on a surging ocean of crowds. And I who am temperamentally lazy, ever eager to cultivate rhythmic ideas on a rich soil of idleness, am compelled to work harder than most people who would die of boredom if gods in their jesting mood forcibly imposed on them the boon of leisure. At first I try to be true to my original nature and struggle against all contradictory compulsions but my fate is stronger and most often I end by yielding to its conspiracy. The organizers of this Conference will bear witness to the fact that such has been the case with me about my appearance today in this meeting. My timidity and laziness combined all their forces against the invitation till they were routed by my stars which always laugh at my futile recalcitrance. But at the same time there was an under-current of strong attraction which helped to bring about this end. For I, as a poet, owe my endless debt to womankind, specially to those who have taken intimate part in shaping my dreams and my destiny. They came to me, as the seasons come to the earth, with varied urgings of flowers and fruitfulness; they brought to my life the inspiration of love and beauty, invocation of the power that lies dormant until touched by womanly grace. I did not have the heart to neglect the occasion like the present one when I would be able to offer my homage to women of my country and tell them that I myself join in the profound expression of recognition given in India to woman in which she is proclaimed as *Shakti*, the living symbol of divine energy whose inner shrine is in the subconscious depth of human nature and outer manifestations in sweetness of service, simplicity of self-dedication and silent heroism of daily sacrifices.

I know that this is the fit occasion when you may wish to hear from me my ideas about women's place in the world and I cannot do better than to quote with a few changes some paragraphs from a paper of mine already published which deals with this subject.

Man having the advantage over woman in a comparative freedom from biological obligations could devote his unhampered leisure in constructing a civilization which naturally followed in a large measure his own temperament and tendencies and woman for ages was constrained to adjust herself to a narrowness of sphere allowed to her. At the present stage of history civilization has become primarily masculine, a civilization of power in which woman from her captivity spends her surplus wealth of emotion in merely decorative purposes of society. Therefore the civilization has lost its balance and is moving by hopping from war to war, trampling helpless life on its path under its drunken tread. Its motive forces are the forces of constant coercions in big scales for the sake of results of absurdly vast dimensions, entailing appalling

number of human sacrifices. Today we find this uncadenced civilization crashing at a tremendous speed along a perilous slope, knocking against unforeseen catastrophes, never knowing how to stop. And at last the time has arrived when woman must step in and impart her life-rhythm to this reckless movement of power.

For, woman's function is the patient and passive function of the soil, which not only helps the tree to grow but keeps its growth within the limits of normality. The tree must have life's adventure sending up and spreading out its branches on all sides, but all its deeper bonds of relation are hidden and held firm in the soil. Our civilization must also have its passive foundation, broad and deep and stable. It must not be mere growth but a harmony of growth in which wealth never exceeds the wholesomeness of health.

A man's interest in his fellow-beings becomes real when he finds in them some special form of usefulness or striking gift of powers, but a woman feels interest in her fellow-beings because they are human, not because of some particular purpose which they can serve, uncommon talent which they may possess. Her exuberance of vital interest is spontaneously expressive; it makes her speech, her laughter, her movement, graceful and picturesque: for the note of gracefulness is in this harmony with all our surrounding interests.

Fortunately for us, our everyday world has the subtle and unobtrusive beauty of the commonplace, and we have to depend upon our own sensitive minds to realize its wonders which are modestly reticent. If we can pierce through the exterior, we find that the world in its commonplace aspects is a miracle.

We realize this truth intuitively through our power of love; and women, through this power, discover that the object of their love and sympathy, in spite of its ragged disguise of triviality, has infinite worth for which life itself can be sacrificed.

Wherever there is life's claim which is concretely personal there is woman's world. The domestic world is the world where every individual finds his worth as an individual, therefore his value is not the market value but the inherent value of reality, which is for love to discover, that is to say, the value that God in his infinite mercy has set upon all his creatures.

Woman has her natural power that penetrates through the surface to the heart of things, where in the mystery of life dwells an eternal source of interest; and therefore her love has not necessarily to wait for the excitation of surprising qualities. God has sent woman not merely to explore or exploit but to love the world which is a world of ordinary things and events. She is not in the world of the fairy-tale where the fair woman sleeps for ages till she is touched by the magic wand. In God's world women have their magic wands everywhere, which keep their hearts awake, and these are not the golden wands of wealth nor the iron rods of power.

Of late, with the help of science, civilization has been growing increasingly impersonal in character, so that the full reality of the individual is more and more ignored.

In some societies, infanticide prevailed which ruthlessly kept down the female element of the population as low as possible. The same thing in another form is fast taking place in modern civilization. In its inordinate lust for power and wealth it is daily robbing women of her world of personal relationship, the home is every day being crowded out by the office, and true happiness by sordid claims of utility.

But woman cannot be pushed back for good into the superficial region of the merely decorative by man's aggressive athleticism. For she is not less necessary in civilization than man, but possibly more so. In the geological history of earth the periods of gigantic cataclysms have passed when the earth had not attained that mellowness of maturity which despises all violent exhibition of force. And the civilization of competing commerce and fighting nationalism must also make room for that stage of perfection whose power lies deep in beauty and beneficence.

Therefore although in the present stage of history man is asserting his masculine supremacy and building the tower of his civilization with stone blocks, ignoring the living principle of growth, he cannot altogether crush woman's nature into dust or into his dead building materials. It is not that woman is merely seeking today her freedom of livelihood, struggling against man's monopoly of business, but against man's monopoly of civilization. The monster car of organization is creaking and growling along life's highway, spreading misery and mutilation, for it must have speed and profit before everything else in the world.

Therefore woman must come into the bruised and mained world of the individual; she must claim each one of them as her own, the useless and the insignificant, the lowliest and the lost. She must protect with her care all the beautiful flowers of sentiment from the scorching laughter of the science of proficiency. The world with its insulted individuals has sent its appeal to her. These individuals must find their true value, raise their heads in the sun and renew their faith in god's love through woman's own love.

Let us have no doubt in our minds that those human beings who have been boastful of their arrogant power, and ruthless in their exploitation will be defeated in the next generation of life. It is the same thing that happened in the remote biological age to those great monsters like the mammoths and dinosaurs. They had the gigantic muscles for mighty efforts but at last had to give way to creatures who were physically feebler, taking up smaller space and seeming laughably feminine in their helplessness. And in the future civilization also, the aggressive trespassers of today will have to remove their boundary pillars to make room for the apparently feebler creatures, and the union of man and woman will represent a perfect co-operation in building up of human history on equal terms in every department of life. The future Eve will lure away the future Adam from the wilderness of a masculine dispensation and mingle her talents with those of her partner in a joint creation of a paradise of their own. The rudely elbowing age of relentless rapacity will give way to that of a generous communion of minds and means, when individuals will not be

allowed to be terrorised into abject submission by idealistic bullies compelled to lose their own physiognomy in a gigantic mask of a nebulous abstraction.

1933

REPLY TO THE MADRAS CORPORATION ADDRESS

MR MAYOR AND THE MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION OF MADRAS,

Allow me to offer my thanks for the welcome accorded to me on behalf of the citizens of this great city. There was a time when poets depended upon the favour of the king's court for their recognition. Now that prerogative has descended upon the people and I have had amazing good fortune in winning popular applause in a measure which is too perilously enormous.

However, I have not come to you today as a poet for gathering approbation, but as one possessed of an insistent purpose which like a pod bearing seeds has its only impulse which is for dissemination. The idea that has gained a hold upon my mind and which has given the name Visva-Bharati may be known to you and yet not clearly defined. Therefore I take this opportunity for repeating myself in the hope that my appeal may find some response in some of your minds and make you think.

From the beginning of her history the race problem has been the one great problem with which India has been compelled to deal. Peoples different in colour and culture came into closest contact on her soil which at first gave rise to deadly conflicts till they subsided into a passive mutual tolerance splitting up the multitude into closely guarded compartments. That this has not been the best possible answer to the Sphinx riddle given to us to solve, is amply proved by our history which has borne a continuous series of humiliation upto the present day. The barriers that obstruct the flow of human sympathy to reach all parts of the social system are sure to produce a fatal weakness that easily gives way to all attacks of evil. We can never hope to find our salvation by some artificial means, some apportionment of votes, some political machinery imported from foreign markets. Our minds must be educated truly to realize the deeper bond of human relationship, the lack of which makes us miss our meaning and hinders us in our fulfilment. Visva-Bharati stands for that spiritual attitude of mind which has its faith in the fundamental unity of man, the unity which is not merely a part of a policy but representing an eternal truth.

The problem which appeared before India still claiming its final solution has become today a world problem. The human races have come out of their traditional reservation fence into mutual contact. This sudden change from a life of comparative seclusion to that of mutual proximity will test to the full their moral adaptability. The peculiar qualities which gave special advantage to some of them in former days, may in order to save these very people, have to give place to others of an opposite kind.

It is difficult for us to realize that the sunset clouds of the past, under their golden flourishes and blood-red magnificence conceal approaching doom, and people are still talking in a language which hardly takes count of the impending night. The vastness of the race problem with which we are faced

today will either compel us to train ourselves to moral fitness, in place of merely external efficiency, or the complications arising out of it will fetter all our movements and drag us to our death.

Our first meeting has only recognized our differences in language, tradition, and degree of physical strength and in the place of geographical barriers it has thereupon set up the barriers of mutual misunderstanding. Even the religious ministers sent by the West to the East have in their sectarian pride emphasised and exaggerated these differences more than any other body of men. They have produced the psychology which makes it comfortably easy for the military and mercantile powers of their community to carry on their mission of depredation in alien countries helplessly open to their inroads.

This consciousness of difference has poisoned our literature, our history and the education of our children,—it has invaded the frontier line of science where it touches sociology. Like what we have experienced in our own community, the cultivation of intense race egotism is the one thing that has found its fullest scope in this meeting of men. In no period of human history has there been such an epidemic of moral perversity, such a universal churning up of jealousy, greed, hatred and mutual suspicion. Every people, weak or strong, is constantly indulging in a violent dream of rendering itself thoroughly obnoxious to others. In this galloping competition of hurtfulness, on the slope of a bottomless pit, no nation dares to stop or slow down. A scarlet fever with a raging temperature has attacked the entire body of mankind and political passion has taken the place of creative personality in all departments of life.

It is wellknown that when greed has for its object material gain, then it can have no end. It is like the chasing of the horizon by a lunatic.To go on in a competition of multiplying millions is a steeple-chase of insensate futility, that has obstacles but no goal. It has for its parallel the fight with material weapons, weapons which must be perpetually multiplied, opening up new vistas of destruction and evoking new forms of insanity in the forging of frightfulness. Thus seems to have commenced the last fatal adventure of drunken passion riding on an intellect of prodigious power.

When the condition of the world is so desperate, it will not in the least help us if we in the East, as we already find in Japan, also join in this stampede towards a general annihilation. We must discover our salvation in some other power that has its basis upon sanity, and this power is moral. The ideal of education which Visva-Bharati dreams of realizing in spite of the obstacles of all kinds, is to help in the development of intellectual and moral sympathy for one's fellow-beings, the spirit of service and sacrifice, and the dauntless attitude of refusal towards evil of all kinds in the face of calumny and persecution.

Material force has its power in the physical blows it can inflict and therefore emulation goes on endlessly augmenting the means of dealing such blows. It can only come to a natural stop when man asserts the dignity of his

spirit and says; 'I am not afraid'. It is our weakness which maintains a material power dominating us; the power which is spiritual dwells in our strength, in our fearlessness, fortitude and spirit of renunciation.

So long men had been cultivating, almost with a religious fervour, that mentality which is the product of racial isolation; poets sang in a loud pitch of bragging of the exploits of their popular man-slayers; money-makers neither felt pity nor shame in the unscrupulous dexterity of their pocket-picking; and diplomats scattered lies in order to reap concessions from the devastated future of their victims. Man, suckled at the wolf's breast, sheltered in the brute's den, brought up in prowling habit of depredation, suddenly discovers today through a series of cataclysms that his true power lies in yielding up his brute force for the freedom of spirit. The time has come for him to realize that the subtle intricacies of human existence find their perfect unity in the harmony of interdependence, never in the vigorous exercise of elbows in the midst of the mutually pushing multitude, clamouring for a solitary peak of self-assertion.

This spirit of interdependence is the divine spirit of meekness in life which gives it the unseen and inexhaustible strength to inherit the earth, that we find in the green grass whose banner of conquest is humble and yet ever victorious. Therefore I would bring to you the cry of this new Age which is waiting to close the bloodstained pages of its past and to hear the Epic that will voice its hope in a great song of a triumphant humanity.

1934

THE RELIGION OF AN ARTIST

I WAS BORN in 1861: That is not an important date of history, but it belongs to a great epoch in Bengal, when the currents of three movements had met in the life of our country. One of these, the religious, was introduced by a very great-hearted man of gigantic intelligence, Raja Rammohan Roy. It was revolutionary, for he tried to reopen the channel of spiritual life which had been obstructed for many years by the sands and debris of creeds that were formal and materialistic, fixed in external practices lacking spiritual significance. People who cling to an ancient past have their pride in the antiquity of their accumulations, in the sublimity of time-honoured walls around them. They grow nervous and angry when some great spirit, some lover of truth, breaks open their enclosure and floods it with the sunshine of thought and the breath of life. Ideas cause movement and all forward movements they consider to be a menace to their warehouse security.

This was happening about the time I was born. I am proud to say that my father was one of the great leaders of that movement, a movement for whose sake he suffered ostracism and braved social indignities. I was born in this atmosphere of the advent of new ideals, which at the same time were old, older than all the things of which that age was proud.

There was a second movement equally important. Bankimchandra Chatterjee, who though much older than myself, was my contemporary and lived long enough for me to see him, was the first pioneer in the literary revolution which happened in Bengal about that time. Before his arrival our literature had been oppressed by a rigid rhetoric that choked its life and loaded it with ornaments that became its fetters. Bankimchandra was brave enough to go against the orthodoxy which believed in the security of tombstones and in that finality which can only belong to the lifeless. He lifted the dead weight of ponderous forms from our language and with a touch of his magic wand aroused our literature from her age-long sleep. A great promise and a vision of beauty she revealed to us when she awoke in the fulness of her strength and grace.

There was yet another movement started about this time called the National. It was not fully political, but it began to give voice to the mind of our people trying to assert their own personality. It was a voice of impatience at the humiliation constantly heaped upon us by people who were not oriental, and who had, especially at that time, the habit of sharply dividing the human world into the good and the bad according to the hemispheres to which they belong.

This contemptuous spirit of separatedness was perpetually hurting us and causing great damage to our own world of culture. It generated in our young men a distrust of all things that had come to them as an inheritance from their past. The old Indian pictures and other works of art were laughed at by our students in imitation of the laughter of their European schoolmasters of that age of philistinism.

Though later on our teachers themselves had changed their mind, their disciples had hardly yet fully regained confidence in the merit of our art. They have had a long period of encouragement in developing an appetite for third-rate copies of French pictures, for gaudy oleographs abjectly cheap, for the pictures that are products of mechanical accuracy of a stereotyped standard, and they still considered it to be a symptom of superior culture to be able disdainfully to refuse oriental works of creation.

The modern young men of that period nodded their heads and said that true originality lay not in the discovery of the rhythm of the essential in the heart of reality but in the full lips, tinted cheeks and bare breasts of imported pictures. The same spirit of rejection, born of utter ignorance, was cultivated in other departments of our culture. It was the result of the hypnotism exercised upon the minds of the younger generation by people who were loud of voice and strong of arm. The national movement was started to proclaim that we must not be indiscriminate in our rejection of the past. This was not a reactionary movement but a revolutionary one, because it set out with a great courage to deny and to oppose all pride in mere borrowings.

These three movements were on foot and in all three the members of my own family took active part. We were ostracized because of our heterodox opinions about religion and therefore we enjoyed the freedom of the outcast. We had to build our own world with our own thoughts and energy of mind.

I was born and brought up in an atmosphere of the confluence of three movements, all of which were revolutionary. My family had to live its own life, which led me from my young days to seek guidance for my own self-expression in my own inner standard of judgment. The medium of expression doubtless was my mother tongue. But the language which belonged to the people had to be modulated according to the urge which I as an individual had.

No poet should borrow his medium ready-made from some shop of orthodox respectability. He should not only have his own seeds but prepare his own soil. Each poet has his own distinct medium of language—not because the whole language is of his own make, but because his individual use of it, having life's magic touch, transforms it into a special vehicle of his own creation.

The races of man have poetry in their heart and it is necessary for them to give, as far as is possible, a perfect expression to their sentiments. For this they must have a medium, moving and pliant, which can freshly become their very own, age after age. All great languages have undergone and are still undergoing changes. Those languages which resist the spirit of change are doomed and will never produce great harvests of thought and literature. When forms become fixed, the spirit either weakly accepts its imprisonment within them or rebels. All revolutions consist of the fight of the within against invasion by the without.

There was a great chapter in the history of life on this earth when some irresistible inner force in man found its way out into the scheme of things, and sent forth its triumphant mutinous voice, with the cry that it was not going to

be overwhelmed from outside by the huge brute beast of a body. How helpless it appeared at the moment, but has it not nearly won? In our social life also revolution breaks out when some power concentrates itself in outside arrangements and threatens to enslave for its own purpose the power which we have within us.

When an organization which is a machine becomes a central force, political, commercial, educational or religious, it obstructs the free flow of inner life of the people and waylays and exploits it for the augmentation of its own power. To-day, such concentration of power is fast multiplying on the outside and the cry of the oppressed spirit of man is in the air which struggles to free itself from the grip of screws and bolts, of unmeaning obsessions.

Revolution must come and men must risk revilement and misunderstanding, especially from those who want to be comfortable, who put their faith in materialism, and who belong truly to the dead past and not to modern times, the past that had its age in distant antiquity when physical flesh and size predominated, and not the mind of man.

Purely physical dominance is mechanical and modern machines are merely exaggerating our bodies, lengthening and multiplying our limbs. The modern mind, in its innate childishness, delights in this enormous bodily bulk, representing an inordinate material power, saying: "Let me have the big toy and no sentiment which can disturb it." It does not realize that in this we are returning to that antediluvian age which revelled in its production of gigantic physical frames, leaving no room for the freedom of the inner spirit.

All great human movements in the world are related to some great ideal. Some of you may say that such a doctrine of spirit has been in its death-throes for over a century and is now moribund; that we have nothing to rely upon but external forces and material foundations. But I say, on my part, that your doctrine was obsolete long ago. It was exploded in the springtime of life, when mere size was swept off the face of the world, and was replaced by man, brought naked into the heart of creation, man with his helpless body, but with his indomitable mind and spirit.

When I began my life as a poet, the writers among our educated community took their guidance from their English text-books which poured upon them lessons that did not fully saturate their minds. I suppose it was fortunate for me that I never in my life had the kind of academic training which is considered proper for a boy of respectable family. Though I cannot say I was altogether free from the influence that ruled young minds of those days, the course of my writings was nevertheless saved from the groove of imitative forms. In my versification, vocabulary and ideas, I yielded myself to the vagaries of an untutored fancy which brought castigation upon me from critics who were learned, and uproarious laughter from the witty. My ignorance combined with my heresy turned me into a literary outlaw.

When I began my career I was ridiculously young; in fact, I was the youngest of that band who had made themselves articulate. I had neither the protective armour of mature age, nor enough English to command respect.

So in my seclusion of contempt and qualified encouragement I had my freedom. Gradually I grew up in years—for which, however, I claim no credit. Steadily I cut my way through derision and occasional patronage into a recognition in which the proportion of praise and blame was very much like that of land and water on our earth.

What gave me boldness when I was young was my early acquaintance with the old Vaishnava poems of Bengal, full of the freedom of metre and courage of expression. I think I was only twelve when these poems first began to be reprinted. I surreptitiously got hold of copies from the desks of my elders. For the edification of the young I must confess that this was not right for a boy of my age. I should have been passing my examinations and not following a path that would lead to loss of marks. I must also admit that the greater part of these lyrics was erotic and not quite suited to a boy just about to reach his teens. But my imagination was fully occupied with the beauty of their forms and the music of their words; and their breath, heavily laden with voluptuousness, passed over my mind without distracting it.

My vagabondage in the path of my literary career had another reason. My father was the leader of a new religious movement, a strict monotheism based upon the teachings of the Upanishads. My countrymen in Bengal thought him almost as bad as a Christian, if not worse. So we were completely ostracized, which probably saved me from another disaster, that of imitating our own past.

Most of the members of my family had some gift—some were artists, some poets, some musicians and the whole atmosphere of our home was permeated with the spirit of creation. I had a deep sense almost from infancy of the beauty of Nature, an intimate feeling of companionship with the trees and the clouds, and felt in tune with the musical touch of the seasons in the air. At the same time, I had a peculiar susceptibility to human kindness. All these craved expression. The very earnestness of my emotions yearned to be true to themselves, though I was too immature to give their expression any perfection of form.

Since then I have gained a reputation in my country, but till very late a strong current of antagonism in a large section of my countrymen persisted. Some said that my poems did not spring from the national heart; some complained that they were incomprehensible; others that they were unwholesome. In fact, I have never had complete acceptance from my own people, and that too has been a blessing; for nothing is so demoralizing as unqualified success.

This is the history of my career. I wish I could reveal it more clearly through the narration of my own work in my own language. I hope that will be possible some day or other. Languages are jealous. They do not give up their best treasures to those who try to deal with them through an intermediary belonging to an alien rival. We have to court them in person and dance attendance on them. Poems are not like market commodities transferable. We cannot receive the smiles and glances of our sweetheart through an attorney, however diligent and dutiful he may be.

I myself have tried to get at the wealth of beauty in the literature of the European languages, long before I gained a full right to their hospitality. When I was young I tried to approach Dante, unfortunately through an English translation. I failed utterly, and felt it my pious duty to desist. Dante remained a closed book to me.

I also wanted to know German literature and, by reading Heine in translation, I thought I had caught a glimpse of the beauty there. Fortunately I met a missionary lady from Germany and asked her help. I worked hard for some months, but being rather quickwitted, which is not a good quality, I was not persevering. I had the dangerous facility which helps one to guess the meaning too easily. My teacher thought I had almost mastered the language, which was not true. I succeeded, however, in getting through Heine, like a man walking in sleep crossing unknown paths with ease, and I found immense pleasure.

Then I tried Goethe. But that was too ambitious. With the help of the little German I had learnt, I did go through *Faust.* I believe I found my entrance to the palace, not like one who has keys for all the doors, but as a casual visitor who is tolerated in some general guest-room, comfortable but not intimate. Properly speaking, I do not know my Goethe, and in the same way many other great luminaries are dusky to me.

This is as it should be. Man cannot reach the shrine if he does not make the pilgrimage. So, one must not hope to find anything true from my own language in translation.

In regard to music, I claim to be something of a musician myself. I have composed many songs which have defied the canons of orthodox propriety and good people are disgusted at the impudence of a man who is audacious only because he is untrained. But I persist, and God forgives me because I do not know what I do. Possibly that is the best way of doing things in the sphere of art. For I find that people blame, but also sing my songs, even if not always correctly.

Please do not think I am vain. I can judge myself objectively and can openly express admiration for my own work, because I am modest. I do not hesitate to say that my songs have found their place in the heart of my land, along with her flowers that are never exhausted, and that the folk of the future, in days of joy or sorrow or festival, will have to sing them. This too is the work of a revolutionist.

If I feel reluctant to speak about my own view of religion, it is because I have not come to my own religion through the portals of passive acceptance of a particular creed owing to some accident of birth. I was born to a family who were pioneers in the revival in our country of a religion based upon the utterance of Indian sages in the Upanishads. But owing to my idiosyncrasy of temperament, it was impossible for me to accept any religious teaching on the only ground that people in my surroundings believed it to be true. I could not persuade myself to imagine that I had religion simply because everybody whom I might trust believed in its value.

My religion is essentially a poet's religion. Its touch comes to me through the same unseen and trackless channels as does the inspiration of my music. My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has my poetical life. Somehow they are wedded to each other, and though their betrothal had a long period of ceremony, it was kept secret from me. I am not, I hope, boasting when I confess to my gift of poesy, an instrument of expression delicately responsive to the breath that comes from depth of feeling. From my infancy I had the keen sensitiveness which always kept my mind tingling with consciousness of the world around me, natural and human.

I had been blessed with that sense of wonder which gives a child his right of entry into the treasure-house of mystery which is in the heart of existence. I neglected my studies because they rudely summoned me away from the world around me, which was my friend and my companion, and when I was thirteen I freed myself from the clutch of an educational system that tried to keep me imprisoned within the stone-walls of lessons.

I had a vague notion as to who or what it was that touched my heart's chords, like the infant which does not know its mother's name, or who or what she is. The feeling which I always had was a deep satisfaction of personality that flowed into my nature through living channels of communication from all sides.

It was a great thing for me that my consciousness was never dull about the facts of the surrounding world. That the cloud was the cloud, that a flower was a flower, was enough, because they directly spoke to me, because I could not be indifferent to them. I still remember the very moment, one afternoon, when coming back from school I alighted from the carriage and suddenly saw in the sky, behind the upper terrace of our house, an exuberance of deep, dark rain-clouds lavishing rich, cool shadows on the atmosphere. The marvel of it, the very generosity of its presence, gave me a joy which was freedom, the freedom we feel in the love of our dear friend.

There is an illusion I have made use of in another paper, in which I supposed that a stranger from some other planet has paid a visit to our earth and happens to hear the sound of a human voice on the gramophone. All that is obvious to him, and most seemingly active, is the revolving disk; he is unable to discover the personal truth that lies behind, and so might accept the impersonal scientific fact of the disk as final—the fact that could be touched and measured. He would wonder how it could be possible for a machine to speak to the soul. Then if in pursuing the mystery, he should suddenly come to the heart of the music through a meeting with the composer, he would at once understand the meaning of that music as a personal communication.

Mere information of facts, mere discovery of power, belongs to the outside and not to the inner soul of things. Gladness is the one criterion of truth as we know when we have touched Truth by the music it gives, by the joy of the greeting it sends forth to the truth in us. That is the true foundation of all religions; it is not in dogma. As I have said before, it is not as ether waves

that we receive light; the morning does not wait for some scientist for its introduction to us. In the same way, we touch the infinite reality immediately within us only when we perceive the pure truth of love or goodness, not through the explanation of theologians, not through the erudite discussion of ethical doctrines.

I have already confessed that my religion is a poet's religion; all that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. I frankly say that I cannot satisfactorily answer questions about the problem of evil, or about what happens after death. And yet I am sure that there have come moments when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy. It has been said in our Upanishads that our mind and our words come away baffled from the supreme Truth, but he who knows That, through the immediate joy of his own soul, is saved from all doubts and fears.

In the night we stumble over things and become acutely conscious of their individual separateness, but the day reveals the great unity which embraces them. And the man, whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness, at once realizes the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences of race and his mind no longer awkwardly stumbles over individual facts of separateness in the human world, accepting them as final, he realizes that peace is in the inner harmony which dwells in truth, and not in any outer adjustments; and that beauty carries an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in the response of our love.

II

The renowned Vedic commentator, Sāyanāchārya, says:

> यज्ञे हुताशिष्टस्य ओदनस्य सर्वजगतकारणभूता
> ब्रह्माभेदेण स्तुति. क्रियते ।।
>
> The food offering which is left over after the completion of sacrificial rites is praised because it is symbolical of *Brahma*, the original source of the universe.

According to this explanation, *Brahma* is boundless in his superfluity which inevitably finds its expression in the eternal world process. Here we have the doctrine of the genesis of creation, and therefore of the origin of art. Of all living creatures in the world, man has his vital and mental energy vastly in excess of his need, which urges him to work in various lines of creation for its own sake. Like *Brahma* himself, he takes joy in productions that are unnecessary to him, and therefore representing his extravagance and not his hand-to-mouth penury. The voice that is just enough can speak and cry to the extent needed for everyday use, but that which is abundant sings, and in it we find our joy. Art reveals man's wealth of life, which seeks its freedom in forms of perfection which are an end in themselves.

All that is inert and inanimate is limited to the bare fact of existence. Life is perpetually creative because it contains in itself that surplus which ever overflows the boundaries of the immediate time and space, restlessly pursuing its adventure of expression in the varied forms of self-realization. Our living body has its vital organs that are important in maintaining its efficiency, but this body is not a mere convenient sack for the purpose of holding stomach, heart, lungs and brains; it is an image—its highest value is in the fact that it communicates its personality. It has colour, shape and movement, most of which belong to the superfluous, that are needed only for self-expression and not for self-preservation.

This living atmosphere of superfluity in man is dominated by his imagination, as the earth's atmosphere by the light. It helps us to integrate desultory facts in a vision of harmony and then to translate it into our activities for the very joy of its perfection, it invokes in us the Universal Man who is the seer and the doer of all times and countries. The immediate consciousness of reality in its purest form, unobscured by the shadow of self-interest, irrespective of moral or utilitarian recommendation, gives us joy as does the self-revealing personality of our own. What in common language we call beauty, which is in harmony of lines, colours, sounds, or in grouping of words or thoughts, delights us only because we cannot help admitting a truth in it that is ultimate. 'Love is enough', the poet has said; it carries its own explanation, the joy of which can only be expressed in a form of art which also has that finality. Love gives evidence to something which is outside us but which intensely exists and thus stimulates the sense of our own existence. It radiantly reveals the reality of its objects, though these may lack qualities that are valuable or brilliant.

The *I am* in me realizes its own extension, its own infinity whenever it truly realizes something else. Unfortunately, owing to our limitations and a thousand and one preoccupations, a great part of our world, though closely surrounding us, is far away from the lamp-post of our attention: it is dim, it passes by us, a caravan of shadows, like the landscape seen in the night from the window of an illuminated railway compartment: the passenger knows that the outside world exists, that it is important, but for the time being the railway carriage for him is far more significant. If among the innumerable objects in this world there be a few that come under the full illumination of our soul and thus assume reality for us, they constantly cry to our creative mind for a permanent representation. They belong to the same domain as the desire of ours which represents the longing for the permanence of our own self.

I do not mean to say that things to which we are bound by the tie of self-interest have the inspiration of reality; on the contrary, these are eclipsed by the shadow of our own self. The servant is not more real to us than the beloved. The narrow emphasis of utility diverts our attention from the complete man to the merely useful man. The thick label of market-price obliterates the ultimate value of reality.

That fact that we exist has its truth in the fact that everything else does exist, and the 'I am' in me crosses its finitude whenever it deeply realizes itself

in the 'Thou art'. This crossing of the limit produces joy, the joy that we have in beauty, in love, in greatness. Self-forgetting, and in a higher degree, self-sacrifice, is our acknowledgement of this our experience of the infinite. This is the philosophy which explains our joy in all arts, the arts that in their creations intensify the sense of the unity which is the unity of truth we carry within ourselves. The personality in me is a self-conscious principle of a living unity; it at once comprehends and yet transcends all the details of facts that are individually mine, my knowledge, feeling, wish and will, my memory, my hope, my love, my activities, and all my belongings. This personality which has the sense of the *One* in its nature, realizes it in things, thoughts and facts made into units. The principle of unity which it contains is more or less perfectly satisfied in a beautiful face or a picture, a poem, a song, a character or a harmony of inter-related ideas or facts and then for it these things become intensely real, and therefore joyful. Its standard of reality, the reality that has its perfect revelation in a perfection of harmony, is hurt when there is a consciousness of discord—because discord is against the fundamental unity which is in its centre.

All other facts have come to us through the gradual course of our experience, and our knowledge of them is constantly undergoing contradictory changes through the discovery of new data. We can never be sure that we have come to know the final character of anything that there is. But such a knowledge has come to us immediately with a conviction which needs no arguments to support it. It is this, that all my activities have their sources in this personality of mine which is indefinable and yet about the truth of which I am more certain than anything in this world. Though all the direct evidence that can be weighed and measured support the fact that only my fingers are producing marks on the paper, yet no sane man ever can doubt that it is not these mechanical movements that are the true origin of my writings but some entity that can never be known unless known through sympathy. Thus we have come to realize in our own person the two aspects of activities, one of which is the aspect of law represented in the medium, and the other the aspect of will residing in the personality.

Limitation of the unlimited is personality: God is personal where he creates.

He accepts the limits of his own law and the play goes on, which is this world whose reality is in its relation to the Person. Things are distinct not in their essence but in their appearance; in other words, in their relation to one to whom they appear. This is art, the truth of which is not in substance or logic, but in expression. Abstract truth may belong to science and metaphysics, but the world of reality belongs to Art.

The world as an art is the play of the Supreme Person revelling in image making. Try to find out the ingredients of the image—they elude you, they never reveal to you the eternal secret of appearance. In your effort to capture life as expressed in living tissue, you will find carbon, nitrogen and many other things utterly unlike life, but never life itself. The appearance does not offer

any commentary of itself through its material. You may call it *māyā* and pretend to disbelieve it, but the great artist, the *māyāvin*, is not hurt. For art is *māyā*, it has no other explanation but that it seems to be what it is. It never tries to conceal its evasiveness, it mocks even its own definition and plays the game of hide-and-seek through its constant flight in changes.

And thus life, which is an incessant explosion of freedom, finds its metre in a continual falling back in death. Every day is a death, every moment even. If not, there would be amorphous desert of deathlessness eternally dumb and still. So life is *māyā*, as moralists love to say, it *is* and *is not*. All that we find in it is the rhythm through which it shows itself. Are rocks and minerals any better? Has not science shown us the fact that the ultimate difference between one element and another is only that of rhythm? The fundamental distinction of gold from mercury lies merely in the difference of rhythm in their respective atomic constitution, like the distinction of the king from his subject which is not in their different constituents, but in the different metres of their situation and circumstance. There you find behind the scene the Artist, the Magician of rhythm, who imparts an appearance of substance to the unsubstantial.

What is rhythm? It is the movement generated and regulated by harmonious restriction. This is the creative force in the hand of the artist. So long as words remain in uncadenced prose form, they do not give any lasting feeling of reality. The moment they are taken and put into rhythm they vibrate into a radiance. It is the same with the rose. In the pulp of its petals you may find everything that went to make the rose, but the rose which is *māyā*, an image, is lost; its finality which has the touch of the infinite is gone. The rose appears to me to be still, but because of its metre of composition it has a lyric of movement within that stillness, which is the same as the dynamic quality of a picture that has a perfect harmony. It produces a music in our consciousness by giving it a swing of motion synchronous with its own. Had the picture consisted of a disharmonious aggregate of colours and lines, it would be deadly still.

In perfect rhythm, the art-form becomes like the stars which in their seeming stillness are never still, like a motionless flame that is nothing but movement. A great picture is always speaking, but news from a newspaper, even of some tragic happening, is still-born. Some news may be a mere commonplace in the obscurity of a journal; but give it a proper rhythm and it will never cease to shine. That is art. It has the magic wand which gives undying reality to all things it touches, and relates them to the personal being in us. We stand before its productions and say: I know you as I know myself, you are real.

A Chinese friend of mine, while travelling with me through the streets of Peking, suddenly, with great excitement, called my attention to a donkey. Ordinarily a donkey does not have any special force of truth for us, except when it kicks us or when we need its reluctant service. But in such cases, the truth is not emphasized in the donkey but in some purpose or bodily pain

exterior to it. The behaviour of my Chinese friend at once reminded me of the Chinese poems in which the delightful sense of reality is so spontaneously felt and so simply expressed.

This sensitiveness to the touch of things, such abundant delight in the recognition of them, is obstructed when insistent purposes become innumerable and intricate in our society, when problems crowd in our path clamouring for attention, and life's movement is impeded with things and thoughts too difficult for a harmonious assimilation.

This has been growing evident every day in the modern age, which gives more time to the acquisition of life'e equipment than to the enjoyment of it. In fact, life itself is made secondary to life's materials, even like a garden buried under the bricks gathered for the garden wall. Somehow the mania for bricks and mortar grows, the kingdom of rubbish dominates, the days of spring are made futile and the flowers never come.

Our modern mind, a hasty tourist, in its rush over the miscellaneous, ransacks cheap markets of curios which mostly are delusions. This happens because its natural sensibility for simple aspects of existence is dulled by constant preoccupations that divert it. The literature that it produces seems always to be poking her nose into out-of-the-way places for things and effects that are out of the common. She racks her resources in order to be striking. She elaborates inconstant changes in style, as in modern millinery; and the product suggests more the polish of steel than the bloom of life.

Fashions in literature that rapidly tire of themselves seldom come from the depth. They belong to the frothy rush of the surface, with its boisterous clamours for the recognition of the moment. Such literature, by its very strain, exhausts its inner development and quickly passes through outer changes like autumn leaves—produces with the help of paints and patches an up-to-dateness, shaming its own appearance of the immediately preceding date. Its expressions are often grimaces, like the cactus of the desert which lacks modesty in its distortions and peace in its thorns, in whose attitude an aggressive discourtesy bristles up, suggesting a forced pride of poverty. We often come across its analogy in some of the modern writings which are difficult to ignore because of their prickly surprises and paradoxical gesticulations. Wisdom is not rare in these works, but it is a wisdom that has lost confidence in its serene dignity, afraid of being ignored by crowds which are attracted by the extravagant and the unusual. It is sad to see wisdom struggling to seem clever, a prophet arrayed in caps and bells before an admiring multitude.

But in all great arts, literary or otherwise, man has expressed his feelings that are usual in a form that is unique and yet not abnormal. When Wordsworth described in his poem a life deserted by love, he invoked for his art the *usual* pathos expected by all normal minds in connection with such a subject. But the picture in which he incarnated the sentiment was unexpected and yet every sane reader acknowledges it with joy when the image is held before him of:

> . . . a forsaken bird's nest filled with snow
> Mid its own bush of leafless eglantine.

On the other hand, I have read some modern writing in which the coming out of the stars in the evening is described as the sudden eruption of disease in the bloated body of darkness. The writer seems afraid to own the feeling of a cool purity in the star-sprinkled night which is *usual*, lest he should be found out as commonplace. From the point of view of realism the image may not be wholly inappropriate and may be considered as outrageously virile in its unshrinking incivility. But this is not art; this is a jerky shriek, something like the convulsive advertisement of the modern market that exploits mob psychology against its inattention. To be tempted to create an illusion of forcefulness through an over-emphasis of abnormality is a sign of anaesthesia. It is the waning vigour of imagination which employs desperate dexterity in the present-day art for producing shocks in order to poke out into a glare the sensation of the unaccustomed. When we find that the literature of any period is laborious in the pursuit of a spurious novelty in its manner and matter, we must know that it is the symptom of old age, of anaemic sensibility which seeks to stimulate its palsied taste with the pungency of indecency and the tingling touch of intemperance. It has been explained too that these symptoms mostly are the outcome of a reaction against the last-century literature which developed a mannerism too daintily saccharine, unmanly in the luxury of its toilet and over-delicacy of its expressions. It seemed to have reached an extreme limit of refinement which almost codified its conventions, making it easy for the timid talents to reach a comfortable level of literary respectability. This explanation may be true; but unfortunately reactions seldom have the repose of spontaneity, they often represent the obverse side of the mintage which they try to repudiate as false. A reaction against a particular mannerism is liable to produce its own mannerism in a militant fashion, using the toilet preparation of the war paint, deliberately manufactured style of primitive rudeness. Tired of the elaborately planned flower-beds, the gardener proceeds with grim determination to set up everywhere artificial rocks, avoiding natural inspiration of rhythm in deference to a fashion of tyranny which itself is a tyranny of fashion. The same herd instinct is followed in a cult of rebellion as it was in the cult of conformity and the defiance, which is a mere counteraction of obedience, also shows obedience in a defiant fashion. Fanaticism of virility produces a brawny athleticism meant for a circus and not the natural chivalry which is modest but invincible, claiming its sovereign seat of honour in all arts.

It has often been said by its advocates that this show of the rudely loud and cheaply lurid in art has its justification in the unbiased recognition of facts as such; and according to them realism must not be shunned even if it be ragged and evil-smelling. But when it does not concern science but concerns the arts we must draw a distinction between realism and reality. In its own wide perspective of normal environment, disease is a reality which has to be acknowledged in literature. But disease in a hospital is realism fit for the use of science. It is an abstraction which, if allowed to haunt literature, may assume

a startling appearance because of its unreality. Such vagrant spectres do not have a proper modulation in a normal surrounding; and they offer a false proportion in their feature because the proportion of their environment is tampered with. Such a curtailment of the essential is not art, but a trick which exploits mutilation in order to assert a false claim to reality. Unfortunately men are not rare who believe that what forcibly startles them allows them to see more than the facts which are balanced and restrained, which they have to woo and win. Very likely, owing to the lack of leisure, such persons are growing in number, and the dark cellars of sex-psychology and drug-stores of moral virulence are burgled to give them the stimulus which they wish to believe to be the stimulus of aesthetic reality.

I know a simple line sung by some primitive folk in our neighbourhood which I translate thus: 'My heart is like a pebble-bed hiding a foolish stream.' The psycho-analyst may classify it as an instance of repressed desire and thus at once degrade it to a mere specimen advertising a supposed fact, as it does a piece of coal suspected of having smuggled within its dark the flaming wine of the sun of a forgotten age. But it is literature; and what might have been the original stimulus that startled this thought into a song, the significant fact about it is that it has taken the shape of an image, a creation of a uniquely personal and yet universal character. The facts of the repression of a desire are numerously common; but this particular expression is singularly uncommon. The listener's mind is touched not because it is a psychological fact, but because it is an individual poem, representing a personal reality, belonging to all time and place in the human world.

But this is not all. This poem no doubt owed its form to the touch of the person who produced it; but at the same time with a gesture of utter detachment, it has transcended its material—the emotional mood of the author. It has gained its freedom from any biographical bondage by taking a rhythmic perfection which is precious in its own exclusive merit. There is a poem which confesses by its title its origin in a mood of dejection. Nobody can say that to a lucid mind the feeling of despondency has anything pleasantly memorable. Yet these verses are not allowed to be forgotten, because directly a poem is fashioned, it is eternally freed from its genesis, it minimizes its history and emphasizes its independence. The sorrow which was solely personal in an emperor was liberated directly it took the form of verses in stone, it became a triumph of lament, an overflow of delight, hiding the black boulder of its suffering source. The same thing is true of all creation. A dewdrop is a perfect integrity that has no filial memory of its parentage.

When I use the word creation, I mean that through it some imponderable abstractions have assumed a concrete unity in its relation to us. Its substance can be analyzed but not this unity which is in its self-introduction. Literature as an art offers us the mystery which is in its unity.

We read the poem:

Never seek to tell thy love
    Love that never told can be;

For the gentle wind does move
Silently, invisibly.
I told my love, I told my love,
I told all my heart;
Trembling cold in ghastly fears
Ah, she did depart.
Soon as she was gone from me
A traveller came by;
Silently, invisibly,
He took her with a sigh.

It has its grammar, its vocabulary. When we divide them part by part and try to torture out a confession from them, the poem which is *one* departs like the gentle wind, silently, invisibly. No one knows how it exceeds all its parts, transcends all its laws, and communicates with the person. The significance which is in unity is an eternal wonder.

As for the definite meaning of the poem, we may have our doubts. If it were told in ordinary prose, we might feel impatient and be roused to contradict it. We would certainly have asked for an explanation as to who the traveller was and why he took away love without any reasonable provocation. But in this poem we need not ask for an explanation unless we are hopelessly addicted to meaning-collection which is like the collection mania for dead butterflies. The poem as a creation, which is something more than as an idea, inevitably conquers our attention; and any meaning which we feel in its words is like the feeling in a beautiful face of a smile that is inscrutable, elusive and profoundly satisfactory.

The unity as a poem introduces itself in a rhythmic language in a gesture of character. Rhythm is not merely in some measured blending of words, but in a significant adjustment of ideas, in a music of thought produced by a subtle principle of distribution, which is not primarily logical but evidential. The meaning which the word character contains is difficult to define. It is comprehended in a special grouping of aspects which gives it an irresistible impetus. The combination it represents may be uncouth, may be unfinished, discordant; yet it has a dynamic vigour in its totality which claims recognition, often against our wishes for the assent of our reason. An avalanche has a character, which even a heavier pile of snow has not; its character is in its massive movement, its incalculable possibilities.

It is for the artist to remind the world that with the truth of our expression we grow in truth. When the man-made world is less an expression of man's creative soul than a mechanical device for some purpose of power, then it hardens itself, acquiring proficiency at the cost of the subtle suggestiveness of living growth. In his creative activities man makes Nature instinct with his own life and love. But with his utilitarian energies he fights Nature, banishes her from his world, deforms and defiles her with the ugliness of his ambitions.

This world of man's own manufacture, with its discordant shrieks and swagger, impresses on him the scheme of a universe which has no touch of the

person and therefore no ultimate significance. All the great civilizations that have become extinct must have come to their end through such wrong expression of humanity; through parasitism on a gigantic scale bred by wealth, by man's clinging reliance on material resources; through a scoffing spirit of denial, of negation, robbing us of our means of sustenance in the path of truth.

It is for the artist to proclaim his faith in the ever-lasting yes—to say: 'I believe that there is an ideal hovering over and permeating the earth, an ideal of that Paradise which is not the mere outcome of fancy, but the ultimate reality in which all things dwell and move.'

I believe that the vision of Paradise is to be seen in the sunlight and the green of the earth, in the beauty of the human face and the wealth of human life, even in objects that are seemingly insignificant and unprepossessing. Everywhere in this earth the spirit of Paradise is awake and sending forth its voice. It reaches our inner ear without our knowing it. It tunes our harp of life which sends our aspiration in music beyond the finite, not only in prayers and hopes, but also in temples which are flames of fire in stone, in pictures which are dreams made everlasting, in the dance which is ecstatic meditation in the still centre of movement.

1936

TO THE CITIZENS OF DELHI

In this busy season when numerous important functions crowd your days, you have against some obvious difficulties, created this opportunity to receive me in behalf of the citizens of Delhi. It is a matter of special gratification to me, because the obstacles have served only to offer emphasis to the sincerity of your love for your poet who by some lucky chance has been able to win recognition for his motherland from some of the proudest people of the world. I can only say in a brief sentence that I thank you from my heart.

On occasions like this the thought has often occurred to me that honour is for the dead and love is for the living. When life's reckoning has been made to the last penny, when all expectations have arrived at an inevitable finality, then only may popular honour come to the man who seems to deserve it; let it come after all deductions have been made and all items of merit survived the scrutiny of time, then let it put a last label to the fortunate name giving it a documentary value of some description. Literary honour is like a tombstone with an authoritative inscription, it solemnly tries to keep fixed with its weight a specified seat for the dead whose movements are stopped for ever. But even then how numerous are the cases that have carelessly allowed the stones to crumble and the inscriptions to fade into illegibility in spite of the initial ceremony of a triumphant trumpet blowing.

Once in a far distant time I was young. I remember to have keenly enjoyed in those days any likely prospect of earning reputation from my contemporaries and from others who may gradually fill the auditorium of the future. It takes time for wisdom to ripen and to enable one to realise that in return for any real service rendered, the best gift is not honour but love which is the most precious form of gratitude, which is not a mere repayment of debt but almost a blessing. Honour is burdensome I can assure you but love does not impose any obligations; it is free and therefore it gives freedom. Fortunately in my career as a poet I have often had my reward from my fellow-beings not merely in the shape of loud applause but through a more intimate contact of spiritual nearness. This fact had struck me with a thankful amazement in those great countries of the west where I was necessarily an alien in language and tradition. The only advantage that I possessed was that I did not have to suffer there from the compelling limitations of being nothing better than a mere British subject; whereas I met the people there on the broad platform of common humanity in an unsullied atmosphere of freedom of fellowship. I have felt that they loved me, that I was their comrade, their fellow traveller in the path of life, that they recognized me as their own and they helped me more than themselves by acknowledging my help. During that travel of mine, most memorable in my life, it came to me with the force of a revelation the truth of the fundamental unity of man. I decided to cherish this truth in the heart of Santiniketan and in spite of the painful twisting of our hearts' cords through all the tension of unnatural relationship, we have been able to keep open in

our institution the channel of intercommunication of hearts, the hearts separated by differing circumstances, racial and historical. I have constantly been helped in this task by the thought that this is the highest ideal of human truth as preached by India when she said *Atmavat sarva bhuteshu ya pasyati sa pasyati.* It has strengthened my conviction to know that such ideals carrying eternal and universal value have been established in human history by those *Mahatmas*, the great souls, who never bent their knees to political magnates or votaries of wealth but have often risen from the races of ragged fraternity, obscured by utter indigence, stricken by mailed fists and hounded by wielders of kingly sceptre. And they have yet gloriously survived the evanascent glitter of all power and pomp by centuries of civilization. Delhi is the one great city which keeps in her ruins and rubbish heaps this lesson about the vastly different values of facts, one of which is represented in the history of those who have offered us the elixir of life everlasting, and the other of those who have the invincible power to smite us to the dust through all the various mediums of devastation. Today our salutations are for those great saints, Kabir, Nanak and Dadu, who realised God's love in man's love; while the incessant stream of countless salams laving the foot of the thrones, carrying on its glistening waves the abject humiliation of ages has vanished into the void, and those thrones burst like bubbles. Let us know for certain that the record of our own history of Modern India is also being kept in Time's archives and the names that will ever shine in its pages are some that are hushed today in awesome silence and others execrated by the mighty.

My friends, let me conclude this address by requesting you not to burden me with honour, which so often is heavily padded with a great proportion of unreality, but garland your poet with your love. No more hand-clappings but warm hand-clasping; bring the healing balm of sympathy to alleviate the intolerable weariness of the last few miles of my lie's journey. Now when the lonesome toil of nearly forty years of my mature days has approached its end, do not dismiss me off cheaply with promises of memorial meetings when I am no longer amongst you, offer me succour even now when I sorely need it and leave my memorial in my own hands and Time's judgment.

1936

THE COMMUNAL AWARD

My friends, considering the gravity of our situation my address today will be brief, because in my age expenditure of breath has to be economised, specially as there is every likelihood of its being wasted.

It is needless for me to say that I have no gift for politics. The subject of this meeting—which is communal awards—carries chiefly a political implication and this for a long while is my first participation in a discussion which deals with politics. In spite of some hesitation I yielded at last to a growing anxiety in my mind for my country; I found it painfully impossible to ignore the sinister threat of a bisecting blade hissing while being sharpened, ready to divide the one vital sensitive cord that is to bind our people into a nation.

Today the shadow of a dark age has fallen upon Europe. She seems boisterously eager to put out the light of ideals which she herself had specially brought to a new age and her newspapers to-day are full of the malevolent measures taken by dictatorial powers against their victims to keep them crippled for good or thrust them completely aside. I shrink from comparing with some of those acts the introduction in our country of a scheme in which there will remain no scruple to wrench off one of the most sensitive roots of our growing national being. The incident will appear too small and be passed over in silent apathy by the larger world, for those who are helplessly affected by it suffer from the cruellest of insults, the insult of insignificance. However, for us the enormity is such that I felt ashamed to claim the privilege of old age and failing health and was drawn out of my accustomed seclusion to cry my warning, even if it be a cry in the wilderness.

The Communal Award, carrying the malediction of a separated political life has been pronounced even upon groups and communities of our country that did not want it. The Indian body-politic is to be divided into eighteen different sections. Mahatma Gandhi described this process as a vivisection of the body-politic which will emerge as a carcass out of this operation.

And this evil of separate electorate is made worse by the scheme of weightages whereby communities are differently valued to suit the present mood of the Government. For reasons which need not be explained the Hindus are handicapped most in the coming constitution, and Bengali Hindus, instead of receiving any protection, being in the minority, have specially been singled out for a reduction of their representation even below their natural population strength by weightage being cast against them. Though a tacit compliment, it is an open assault employing a novel political arithmetic invidious enough to turn the methods of responsible government into most irresponsible means by which one community is made permanently independent of the co-operation of the other while wielding the right to oppress it, if it so chooses. It is not that we wish to deny our Muslim countrymen the benefit of their numbers, nor that we suspect them of dangerous designs. It is only that we refuse to accept the fate of all future prospect of mutual co-

operation blighted by a scheme which puts a premium upon communal allegiance at the expense of national interest—a scheme which engenders suspicion where there should be trust and corrupts both the communities by encouraging fanatics to make political profit out of communal passion. I beg to remind our rulers that even worse than the commercial exploitation of our economic life is this political poisoning of our national blood, worse than punishing subjects on suspicion, without trial for an indefinite period; for it is punishing the future, an eternal damnation for acts of disobedience, real or imaginary proved or unproved.

Ever since the very suggestion of this proposal, the atmosphere in our province has become turbid with passion menacing amenities of civilized life, based upon mutual tolerance and co-operation. Already a spirit of wanton destructiveness seems to be creeping even in the commonwealth of our literature, threatening violence to our language, rapidly creating a situation which could have its analogy if the Scotch people had suddenly revolted with a calvinistic frenzy of bitterness against the English tongue because of its difference from their own traditional speech and thus if they had deliberately attempted to wreck the intellectual communication between them and the rest of the country. This is the first red signal of danger presaging a fatal collision between neighbouring communities whose duty it is to create a comprehensive life of a common welfare. If it is disturbed in an unthinking obduracy of a communal spite, then, not only our political efficiency but economic prosperity also will be involved in ruin. We have been watching on the part of our Government the uneven discrimination in the apportioning of appointments in spite of the risk it runs in lowering the standard of administration. Owing to reasons for which the Hindus are not answerable, our Muslim brethren have suffered for long from inequality of advantages in various lines. With all my heart I should welcome its being gradually brought to a balance. But it is too plain that there is a spirit working behind the arrangement savouring of a purpose not pertinent to the problem, and this has made its process so aggressively unhealthy for our collective good. Offering any encouragement to the clamouring for crumbs of favour at the table of a supreme power not only causes meanness but feebleness of character. It cannot be gainsaid that the Mahomedans own in them virile qualities that are remarkable. There is no doubt that their democratic tendency of mind has given them special fitness for winning in the race of life. Those of them with whom I have had opportunity to come in close relationship I have frankly admired and loved, and their number is not small. I have always intently hoped that all the differences separating us that mostly arise from utter stupidity and primitive spirit of unreason could be removed through nearer personal touch and comradeship. But any biased treatment from any alien source that is not expected to have a natural sympathy and unselfish concern for the country can only emphasize these differences into a mortal mischief. Let us have the far-sighted wisdom to know that concessions acquired through a prudent patronage are always demoralizing, both for

those who are fortunate and others who are deprived. They will create complications that will perpetually irritate each other and in the long run will never serve those who have been helped to an easy path of profit. We, who belong to the same soil must, for the sake of a civilized existence and ultimately for the bare self-protection cultivate mutual friendliness, and both the parties should rise above all immediate provocations and allurements, and should distrust the elements, foreign and indigenous, that sow living thorns in their path of fellowship. We, Hindus must not grudge the favoured partners of our destiny the sudden shower of gifts so long as it lasts; the only cause for anxiety lies in the sureness of a reaction that will follow when the saturation point is reached and yet satiety remains distant, when the one-sided game of indulgence crosses the bounds of even autocratic decency. The most ill-omened aspect of the problem which frightens us is when we realize the absurdity of bringing arguments to the present question, being perfectly certain that our rulers long trained in parliamentary ethics, know better than ourselves that communal division in a political organization is fatal to its effectiveness.

And what is the most unfortunate fact about it is, that the vehemence of our wrath is poured upon the Mahomedans who are as much the victims of a disastrous policy as we are ourselves. For it never can be to their best interest this offer of an intoxicant. It will no doubt rudely and constantly disturb our own peace but in the natural course of things one day the other party will have time to sober down and discover in dismay that some very valuable things have been destroyed and possibilities ruined that are not easy to be recovered. However, in the meanwhile, I earnestly ask my Hindu brethren never to lose their temper and aggravate the injury into suicide. As for those who have instituted this policy under various plausible excuses it will be presumptuous for me to warn them for their wrong-headed statesmanship. If they have no compunction to mix some baser alloy in their gift which could have its full value only by its uncorrupted generosity, they will not only miss their dues in thanks which I am sure they cannot afford to despise but—well, they know better.

Those who have studied the modern condition in Europe have surely learnt that for a moment it may become possible to force people reduced to helplessness to swallow injustice but not so to force them to assimilate it. Sooner or later it is ejected in a poisoned mass of contamination. Let us forget for the moment the dominant power that is here to make and mar our future and turn to those of our countrymen who seem to be losing their mental equilibrium through a pathetic illusion of an everlasting good luck and remind them that in this critical period of our history any wrong turn taken in the path of our self-government is sure to lead to a permanent disgrace and calamity. It is not the difference in opportunities which in itself is dangerous but the mental attitude created through it, the attitude of exultation on the one side recklessly pushes its triumph with immediate impunity to ungenerous extremes, and on the other side, the resentment ranking deep seeking to find outlets often in a wrong manner and unreasonable excuses. It encourages

both the parties light-heartedly to perpetrate acts that embitter racial memory for all time to come, creating deep-rooted prejudices that attack the foundation of neighbourly good fellowship. It is very much like infusing the air with poison gas to make victory easy using a terribly wasteful method of attaining in iniquitous success that speads its torments far into the heart of an innocent multitude and non-combatant future.

I was born too early for this post-war age of disillusionment. I have had my moral sustenance from the much-maligned Victorian age through its literature and its struggling faith in humanity as it reached us across the sea. Today when we find all through the West the ruthless repression of freedom, and that callously arrogant cynicism which is indifferent to a wide-spread human misery and injustice, I still must almost against all contrary evidence place my confidence in the sensitiveness to the ideals of humanity which I considered as the characteristic trait of the Western mind. And therefore, when I grow aware in our own neibhbourhood of some far-reaching and deeply laid diplomatic move which means permanently holding paralysed in its meshes our future for the sake of a tighter grip upon our vitals, I still feel inclined to appeal to the chivalrous humanity of the Englishman representing the best ideals of the Western culture. I believe that if those ideals that show signs of dilapidation were restored once again and somehow brought to bear even upon Indian politics, if the people that determine the fate of this country could win in our hearts the prestige of unswerving fairplay it will not only add to the credit of their civilization but to their worldly benefit in the long run. If those that have called this meeting had no such faith, conscious or unconscious, in this race then this meeting is foolish and devoid of meaning. I am sure, even though they may not clearly define it to themselves, they are certain that the higher stratum of English life does not solely constitute of persons like the late Premier who betrayed his often-pronounced ideals when they concerned India or some Viceroy who cleverly navigated the white paper boat into a stagnant water of inanity, and who must have inwardly chuckled at all our discomfitures and blunders of inexperience. If this pathetic faith which dies hard is an illusion, then let us leave this child's play of meetings and conferences and exclusively concentrate our attention to build our own history in an unaided and dignified aloofness and in patient wisdom. Or even fall back upon the stoic indifference of the oriental mind, the indifference that unconsciously prepares the soil for an unwelcome and unaccustomed cataclysm.

1936

ADDRESS AT THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

FRIENDS,

When I was asked to address this distinguished gathering I was naturally reluctant, for I do not know if I can be called religious in the current sense of the term, not claiming as my possession any particular idea of God, authorised by some time-honoured institution. If, in spite of all this, I have accepted this honour, it is only out of respect to the memory of the great saint with whose centenary the present Parliament is associated. I venerate Paramahamsa Dev because he, in an arid age of religious nihilism, proved the truth of our spiritual heritage by realizing it, because the largeness of his spirit could comprehend seemingly antagonistic modes of *sadhana*, and because the simplicity of his soul shames for all time the pomp and pedantry of pontiffs and pundits.

I have nothing new to tell you, no esoteric truth to propound to you. I am a mere poet, a lover of men and of creation. But since love gives a certain insight, I may perhaps claim to have sometimes caught the hushed voice of humanity and felt its suppressed longing for the Infinite. I hope I do not belong to those who, born in a prison-house, never have the good luck to know that it is a prison, who are blissfully unaware that the costliness of their furniture and profuseness of the provisions for their comfort act as invisible walls in a castle of vanity that not only rob them of their freedom but even of the desire for it.

The degree of this freedom is measured according to our realization of the Infinite whether in the outer world, or in the inner life. In a narrow room we may have as much space as is necessary for living and for the exercise of our muscles; the food may be more than sufficient, it may even be sumptuous; yet our inborn craving for what we may call the more, the unattained, if not altogether killed, remains unsatisfied. We are deprived of the Infinite, which is freedom of range, both in the outer world as well as in the ceaseless variety of the world of our experience.

But a more profoundly intimate perception of the Infinite lies in that intensity of our consciousness, which we can only attain when we realize ultimate value in some ideal of perfection, when in the realization of some fact of our life we become aware of an indefinable truth that immensely transcends it. We, in our human nature, have a hunger for *Bhuma*, for immensity, for something a great deal more than what we need immediately for the purposes of life. Men all through their history have been struggling to realize this truth according to the unfolding of their idea of the boundless, and have been gradually changing their methods and plans of existence, constantly meeting failures, but never owning final defeat.

We find that animals have their evolution along the line of the race. They have their individual life which ends with their death. But even in them there

is a touch of the Infinite which urges them to outlive their own life in the life of the race, accepting sufferings and making sacrifices for its sake. The spirit of sacrifice in the parents is this touch of the Infinite,—the motive power which makes the race-life possible, which helps to develop those faculties in them that will enable their descendants to find better opportunity for food and shelter.

But in human beings has been further evolved a sense of the Infinite that goes far beyond the struggle for physical life which merely occupies extended time and extended space. Man has realized that the life of perfection is not merely a life of extension, but one which has its selfless enjoyment of the great and the beautiful.

After we have evolved this sense of the beautiful, of the good, of something that we call truth,—which is deeper and larger than any number of facts,—we have come into an altogether different atmosphere from that wherein the animals and trees have their existence. But we have come into this higher realm only very lately.

Ages and ages have passed, dominated by the life of what we call the self, which is intent upon seeking food and shelter, and upon the perpetuation of the race. But there is a mysterious region waiting for its full recognition, which does not entirely acknowledge loyalty to physical claims. Its mystery constantly troubles us and we are not yet fully at ease in this region. We call it *spiritual*. That word is vague, only because we have not yet been able to realize its meaning completely.

We are groping in the dark, not yet clear in our idea of the ultimate meaning at the centre of this world. Nevertheless, through the dim light which reaches us across the barriers of our physical existence, we seem to have a stronger faith in this spiritual life than in the physical. For even those who do not believe in the truth which we cannot define, but call by the name of spirit,—even they are obliged to behave as though they did believe it to be true, or, at any rate, truer than the world which is evident to our senses. And so even they are often willing to accept death,—the termination of this physical life,—for the sake of the true, the good and the beautiful. This fact expresses man's deeper urge for freedom, for the liberation of his self in the realm of the limitless where he realizes his relationship with the truth which relates him to the universe in a disinterested spirit of love.

When Buddha preached *maitri*—the relationship of harmony—not only with human beings but with all creation, did he not have this truth in his mind that our treatment of the world is wrong when we treat it solely as a fact which can be known and used for our own personal needs? Did he not feel that the true meaning of creation can be understood only through love because it is an eternal expression of love which waits for its answer from our soul emancipated from the bondage of self? This emancipation cannot be negative in character, for love can never lead to negation. The perfect freedom is in a perfect harmony of relationship and not in a mere severance of bondage. Freedom has no content, and therefore no meaning, where it has nothing but

itself. The soul's emancipation is in the fulfilment of its relation to the central truth of everything that there is, which is impossible to define because it comes at the end of all definitions.

The distinctive feature of materialism is the measurability of its outward expression, which is the same thing as the finiteness of its boundaries. And the disputes, civil and criminal, which have raged in the history of man, have mostly been over these same boundaries. To increase one's own bounds one has necessarily to encroach upon those of others. So, because the pride of Power is the pride of Quantity, pride of the mere number of its recruits and victims, the most powerful telescope, when pointed in the direction of Power, fails to reveal the shore of peace across the sea of blood.

Such is the tragedy that so often besets our history when this love of power, which is really the love of self, domineers over the religious life of man, for then the only means by which man could hope to set his spirit free, itself becomes the worst enemy of that freedom. Of all fetters those that falsely assume spiritual designations are the most difficult to break, and of all dungeons the most terrible are those invisible ones where men's souls are imprisoned in self-delusion bred of vanity. For, the undisguised pursuit of self has safety in its openness, like filth exposed to the sun and air. But the self-magnification, with its consequent thwarting of the best in man, that goes on unashamed when religion deadens into sectarianism is a perverse form of worldliness under the mask of religion; it constricts the heart into narrowness much more effectively than the cult of the world based upon material interests can ever do.

Let me try to answer the question as to what this *Spirit* is, for the winning of which all the great religions were brought into being.

The evening sky is revealed to us in its serene aspect of beauty though we know that from the fiery whirlpools which are the stars, chaotic outbursts clash against one another in a conflict of implacable fury. But *Ishavasyam idam survam*,—over and through it all there is spread a mysterious spirit of harmony, constantly modulating rebellious elements into creative unity, evolving ineffable peace and beauty out of the incoherently battling combatants perpetually struggling to elbow out their neighbours into a turmoil of dissolution.

And this great harmony, this everlasting Yea—this is Truth, that bridges the dark abysms of time and space, reconciles contradictions, imparts perfect balance to the unstable. This all-pervading mystery is what we call spiritual in its essence. It is the human aspect of this truth which all great personalities have made their own in their lives and have offered to their fellow-beings in the name of various religions as means of peace and goodwill,—as vehicles of beauty in behaviour, heroism in character, noble aspiration and achievement in all great civilizations.

But when these very religions travel far from their sacred sources, they lose their original dynamic vigour, and degenerate into the arrogance of piety, into an utter emptiness crammed with irrational habits and mechanical

practices, then is their spiritual inspiration befogged in the turbidity of sectarianism, then do they become the most obstinate obstruction that darkens our vision of human unity, piling up out of their accretions and refuse deadweights of unreason across our path of progress,—till at length civilized life is compelled to free its education from the stifling coils of religious creeds. such fratricidal aberrations, in the guise of spiritual excellence, have brought upon the name of God, whom they profess to glorify, uglier discredit than honest and defiant atheism could ever have done.

The reason is, because sectarianism, like some voracious parasite, feeds upon the religion whose colour it assumes, exhausting it so that it knows not when its spirit is sucked dry. It utilises the dead skin for its habitation, as a stronghold for its unholy instinct of fight, its pious vain-gloriousness, fiercely contemptuous of its neighbours' articles of faith.

Sectarian votaries of a particular religion, when taken to task for the iniquitous dealings with their brethren which so deeply injure and insult humanity, immediately try to divert attention by glibly quoting noble texts from their own scriptures which preach love, justice, righteousness, and the divinity immanent in Man,—ludicrously unconscious of the fact that those constitute the most damaging incrimination of their usual attitude of mind. In taking up the guardianship of their religion they allow, on the one hand, physical materialism to invade it by falsely giving eternal value to external practices, often of primitive origin, and moral materialism on the other, by invoking sacred sanction for their forms of worship within the rigid enclosure of special privileges founded upon accident of birth, or conformity, irrespective of moral justification. Such debasement does not belong to any particular religion, but more or less to all religions, the records of whose impious activities are written in brothers' blood, and sealed with the indignities heaped upon them.

All through the course of human history it has become tragically evident that religions, whose mission is liberation of soul, have in some form or other ever been instrumental in shackling freedom of mind and even moral rights. The desecration of truth in unworthy hands,—the truth which was meant to raise humanity morally and materially out of the dusky region of animality, is moreover followed by condign punishment, and thus we find that religious perversity is causing more blindness of reason and deadness of moral sensibility than any other deficiency in our education; just as, the truth represented by science, when used for ignoble traffic, threatens us with annihilation. It has been the saddest experience of man to witness such violation of the highest products of civilization, to find the guardians of religion blessing the mailed fist of temporal power in its campaign of wholesale massacre and consolidation of slavery and science joining hands with the same relentless power in its murderous career of exploitation.

When we come to believe that we are in possession of our God because we belong to some particular sect, it gives us a complete sense of comfort to feel that God is no longer needed, except for breaking with the greater

unction the skulls of people whose idea of God, fortunately or unfortunately, differs from our own in theoretical details. Having thus made provision for our God in some shadow-land of creed, we feel free to reserve all the space in the world of reality for ourselves,—ridding it of the wonder of the Infinite, making it as trivial as our own household furniture. Such unmitigated vulgarity only becomes possible when we have no doubt in our minds that we believe in God while our life ignores Him.

The pious man of sect is proud because he is confident of his right of possession of God. The man of devotion is meek because he is conscious of God's right of love over his life and soul. The object of our possession needs must become smaller than ourselves and, without acknowledging it in so many words, the bigoted sectarian nurses the implicit belief that God can be kept secured for himself and his fellows in a cage which is of their own make. In a similar manner the primitive races of men believe that their ceremonials have a magic influence upon their deities.

Thus every religion that begins as a liberating agency ends as a vast prison-house. Built on the renunciation of its founder, it becomes a possessive institution in the hands of its priests, and claiming to be universal, becomes an active centre of schism and strife. Like a sluggish stream the spirit of man is choked by rotting weeds and is divided into shallow slimy pools that are active only in releasing deadly mists of stupefaction. This mechanical spirit of tradition is essentially materialistic, it is blindly pious but not spiritual, obsessed by phantoms of unreason that haunt feeble minds with their ghastly mimicry of religion. This happens not only to mediocre individuals who hug the fetters that keep them irresponsible or craving for lurid unrealities, but to generations of insipid races that have lost all emphasis of significance in themselves, having missed their present in their ghostly past!

Great souls, like Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, have a comprehensive vision of Truth, they have the power to grasp the significance of each different form of the Reality that is one in all,—but the masses of believers are unable to reconcile the conflict of codes and commands. Their timid and shrunken imagination, instead of being liberated by the vision of the Infinite in religion, is held captive in bigotry and is tortured and exploited by priests and fanatics for uses hardly anticipated by those who originally received it.

Unfortunately, great teachers most often are surrounded by persons whose minds, lacking transparency of atmosphere, obscure and distort the ideas originating from the higher source. They feel a smug satisfaction when the picture of their master which they offer shows features made somewhat in the pattern of their own personality. Consciously and unconsciously they reshape profound messages of wisdom in the mould of their own tortuous understanding, carefully modifying them into conventional platitudes in which they themselves find comfort, and which satisfy the habit-ridden mentality of their own community. Lacking the sensitiveness of mind which is necessary for the enjoyment of truth in its unadulterated purity they exaggerate it in an attempt at megalomaniac enlargement according to their

own insensate standard, which is as absurdly needless for its real appraisement as it is derogatory to the dignity of its original messengers. The history of great men, because of their very greatness, ever runs the risk of being projected on to a wrong background of memory where it gets mixed up with elements that are crudely customary and therefore inertly accepted by the multitude.

I say to you: if you are really lovers of Truth, then dare to seek it in its fullness, in all the infinite beauty of its majesty, but never be content to treasure up its vain symbols in miserly seclusion within the stony walls of conventions. Let us revere the great souls in the sublime simplicity of their spiritual altitude which is common to them all, where they meet in universal aspiration to set the spirit of man free from the bondage of his own individual ego, and of the ego of his race and of his creed; but in that lowland of traditions, where religions challenge and refute each other's claims and dogmas, there a wise man must pass them by in doubt and dismay.

I do not mean to advocate a common church for mankind, a universal pattern to which every act of worship and aspiration must conform. The arrogant spirit of sectarianism which so often uses either active or passive, violent or subtle, methods of persecution, on the least provocation or without any, has to be reminded of the fact that religion, like poetry, is not a mere idea,—it is expression. The self-expression of God is in the variedness of creation; and our attitude towards the Infinite must in its expression also have a variedness of individuality, ceaseless and unending. When a religion develops the ambition of imposing its doctrine on all mankind, it degrades itself into a tyranny and becomes a form of imperialism. That is why we find a ruthless method of fascism in religious matters prevailing in most parts of the world, trampling flat the expansion of the spirit of man under its insensitive heels.

The attempt to make the one religion which is their own, dominate all time and space, comes naturally to men addicted to sectarianism. This makes it offensive to them to be told that God is generous in His distribution of love, and His means of communication with men have not been restricted to a blind lane abruptly stopping at one narrow point of history. If humanity ever happens to be overwhelmed with the universal flood of a bigoted exclusiveness, then God will have to make provision for another Noah's Ark to save His creatures from the catastrophe of spiritual desolation.

What I plead for is a living recognition of the neglected truth that the reality of religion has its basis in the truth of Man's nature in its most intense and universal need and so must constantly be tested by it. Where it frustrates that need, and outrages its reason, it repudiates its own justification.

Let me conclude with a few lines from the great mystic poet of mediaeval India, Kabir, whom I regard as one of the greatest spiritual geniuses of our land:

> The jewel is lost in the mud,
>   and all are seeking for it;
> some look for it in the east, and some in the west;

some in the water and some amongst stones.
But the servant Kabir has appraised it at its true value,
and has wrapped it with care
in a corner of the mantle of his own heart.

1937

CHINA AND INDIA

THE MOST MEMORABLE fact of human history is that of a path-opening, not for the clearing of a passage for machines or machine guns, but for helping the realization by races of their affinity of minds, their mutual obligation of a common humanity. Such a rare event did happen and the path was built between our people and the Chinese in an age when physical obstruction needed heroic personality to overcome it and the mental barrier a moral power of uncommon magnitude. The two leading races of that age met, not as rivals on the battle-field each claiming the right to be the sole tyrant on earth, but as noble friends, glorying in their exchange of gifts. Then came a slow relapse into isolation, covering up the path with its accumulated dust of indifference. Today our old friends have beckoned to us again, generously helping us to retrace that ancient path obliterated by the inertia of forgetful centuries,—and we rejoice.

This is, indeed, a great day for me, a day long looked for, when I should be able to redeem, on behalf of our people, an ancient pledge implicit in our past, the pledge to maintain the intercourse of culture and friendship between our people and the people of China, an intercourse whose foundations were laid eighteen hundred years back by our ancestors with infinite patience and sacrifice. When I went to China several years ago I felt a touch of that great stream of life that sprang from the heart of India and overflowed across mountain and desert into that distant land, fertilising the heart of its people. I thought of that great pilgrimage, of those noble heroes, who, for the sake of their faith, their ideal of the liberation of self that leads to the perfect love which unites all beings, risked life and accepted banishment from home and all that was familiar to them. Many perished and left no trace behind. A few were spared to tell their story, a story not of adventurers and trespassers whose heroism has proved a mere romantic excuse for careers of unchecked brigandage, but a story of pilgrims who came to offer their gifts of love and wisdom, a story indelibly recorded in the cultural memory of their hosts. I read it when I was received there as a representative of a revered race and felt proud as I traced the deep marks our ancestors had left behind of their achievements. But I also felt the humiliation of our long lasting evil fate that has obscured for us in an atmosphere of inanity the great human value of a noble endeavour, one of the most precious in the history of man.

I told my Chinese hosts on that occasion: 'My friends, I have come to ask you to re-open the channel of communcation which I hope is still there; for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion, its lines can still be traced. I have not the same voice that my ancestors had. I have not the wisdom they possessed. My life has not attained that consciousness of fulfilment needed to make this message fruitful. We in India are a defeated race; we have no power, political, military or commercial; we do not know how to help you or injure you materially. But fortunately we can still meet you as your guests, your hosts, your

brothers and your friends. Let that happen. I invite you to us as you have invited me. I do not know whether you have heard of the institution I have established in my land. Its one object is to let India welcome the world to its heart. Let what seems a barrier become a path, and let us unite, not in spite of our differences, but through them. For differences can never be wiped away, and life would be so much the poorer without them. Let all human races keep their own personalities, and yet come together, not in a uniformity that is dead, but in a unity that is living.'

That has happened and friends are here from China with their gift of friendship and co-operation. The Hall which is to be opened today will serve both as the nucleus and as a symbol of that larger understanding that is to grow with time. Here students and scholars will come from China and live as part of ourselves, sharing our life and letting us share theirs, and by offering their labours in a common cause, help in slowly re-building that great course of fruitful contact between our peoples, that has been interrupted for ten centuries. For this Visva-Bharati is, and will, I hope, remain a meeting place for individuals from all countries, East or West, who believe in the unity of mankind and are prepared to suffer for their faith. I believe in such individuals even though their efforts may appear to be too insignificant to be recorded in history.

It might be supposed that in a world so closely knit by railways, steamships and airlines, where almost every big city is cosmopolitan, such special invitations for contact are superfluous. But, unfortunately, the contacts that are being made today have done more to estrange and alienate peoples from one another than physical inaccessibility ever did. We are discovering for ourselves the painful truth that nothing divides so much as the wrong kind of nearness. Peoples seem to be coming in each other's way, dodging and trapping one another, without ever coming together. We meet others, either as tourists when we merely slide against the surface of their life, entering hotels only to disappear from their land, or as exploiters in one disguise or another. We are living in a world where nations are divided into two main groups—those who trample on others' freedom, and those who are unable to guard their own; so that while we have too much of intrusion on others' rights, we have hardly any intercourse with their culture. It is a terrorised world, dark with fear and suspicion, where peaceful races in dread of predatory hordes are retreating into isolation for security.

I am reminded of my experience as we were travelling up from Shanghai to Nanking along the great river, Yang Tse. All through the night I kept on coming out of my cabin to watch the beautiful scene on the banks, the sleeping cottages with their solitary lamps, the silence spread over the hills, dim with mist. When morning broke and brought into view fleets of boats coming down the river, their sails stretching high into the air, a picture of life's activity with its perfect grace of freedom, I was deeply moved and felt that my own sail had caught the wind and was carrying me from captivity, from the sleeping past,

out into the great world of man. It brought to my mind different stages in the history of man's progress.

In the night each village was self-centred, each cottage stood bound by the chain of unconsciousness. I knew, as I gazed on the scene, that vague dreams were floating about in this atmosphere of sleeping souls, but what struck my mind more forcibly was the fact that when men are asleep they are shut up within the very narrow limits of their own individual lives. The lamps exclusively belonged to the cottages, which in their darkness were in perfect isolation. Perhaps, though I could not see them, some prowling bands of thieves were the only persons awake, ready to exploit the weakness of those who were asleep.

When daylight breaks we are free from the enclosure and the exclusiveness of our individual life. It is then that we see the light which is for all men and for all times. It is then that we come to know each other and come to co-operate in the field of life. This was the message that was brought in the morning by the swiftly moving boats. It was the freedom of life in their outspread sails that spoke to me; and I felt glad. I hoped and prayed that morning had truly come in the human world and that the light had broken forth.

This age to which we belong, does it not still represent night in the human world, a world asleep, whilst individual races are shut up within their own limits, calling themselves nations, which barricade themselves, as these sleeping cottages were barricaded, with shut doors, with bolts and bars, with prohibitions of all kinds? Does not all this represent the dark age of civilization, and have we not begun to realize that it is the robbers who are out and awake?

But I do not despair. As the early bird, even while the dawn is yet dark, sings out and proclaims the rising of the sun, so my heart sings to proclaim the coming of a great future which is already close upon us. We must be ready to welcome this new age. There are some people, who are proud and wise and practical, who say that it is not in human nature to be generous, that men will always fight one another, that the strong will conquer the weak and that there can be no real moral foundation for man's civilization. We cannot deny the facts of their assertion that the strong have their rule in the human world: but I refuse to accept this as a revelation of truth.

It is co-operation and love, mutual trust and mutual aid which make for strength and real merit of civilization. New spiritual and moral power must continually be developed to enable men to assimilate their scientific gains, to control their weapons and machines, or these will dominate and enslave them. I know that many will point to the weakness of China and India and tell us that thrown as we are among other ruthlessly strong and aggressive world peoples, it is necessary to emphasize power and progress in order to avoid destruction. It is indeed true that we are weak and disorganized, at the mercy of every barbaric force, but that is not because of our love of peace but because we no longer pay the price of our faith by dying for it. We must learn to defend our

humanity against the insolence of the strong, only taking care that we do not imitate their ways and, by turning ourselves brutal, destroy those very values which alone make our humanity worth defending. For danger is not only of the enemy without but of the treason within us. We had, for over a century, been so successfully hypnotised and dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot that, though choked by the dust, deafened by the noise, humbled by our helplessness, overwhelmed by speed, we yet agreed to acknowledge that this chariot-drive was progress, and that progress was civilization. If we ever ventured to ask, however humbly: 'Progress towards what, and progress for whom?'—it was considered to be peculiarly and ridiculously oriental to entertain such doubts about the absoluteness of progress. It is only of late that a voice has been heeded by us, bidding us take account not only of the scientific perfection of the chariot, but of the depth of ditches lying across its path. Today we are emboldened to ask: what is the value of progress if it make a desert of this beautiful world of man? And though we speak as members of a nation that is humiliated and oppressed and lies bleeding in the dust, we must never acknowledge the defeat, the last insult, the utter ruin of our spirit being conquered, of our faith being sold. We need to hear again and again, and never more than in this modern world of head-hunting and cannibalism in disguise that:—By the help of unrighteousness men do prosper, men do gain victories over their enemies, men do attain what they desire; but they perish at the root.

It is to this privilege of preserving, not the mere body of our customs and conventions, but the moral force which has given quality to our civilization and made it worthy of being honoured, that I invite the co-operation of the people of China, recalling the profound words of their sage, Lao-tze : Those who have virtue attend to their obligations; those who have no virtue attend to their claims. Progress which is not related to an inner ideal, but to an attraction which is external, seeks to satisfy endless claims. But civilization, which is an ideal, gives us power and joy to fulfil our obligations.

Let us therefore abide by our obligation to maintain and nourish the distinctive merit of our respective cultures and not be misled into believing that what is ancient is necessarily outworn and what is modern is indispensable. When we class things as modern or old we make a great mistake in following our calendar of dates. We know that the flowers of Spring are old, that they represent the dawn of life on earth,—but are they therefore symbols of the dead and discarded? Would we rather replace them with artificial flowers made of rags, because they were made 'yesterday'? It is not what is old or what is modern that we should love and cherish but what has truly a permanent human value. And can anything be more worthy of being cherished than the beautiful spirit of the Chinese culture that has made the people love material things without the strain of greed, that has made them love the things of this earth, clothe them with tender grace without turning them materialistic? They have instinctively grasped the secret of the rhythm of things,—not the secret of power that is in science, but the secret of expression. This is a great

gift, for God alone knows this secret. I envy them this gift and wish our people could share it with them.

I do not know what distinctive merit we have which our Chinese friends and others may wish to share. Once indeed our sages dedicated themselves to the ideal of perfect sympathy and intellect, in order to win absolute freedom through wisdom and absolute love through pity. Today we cannot boast of either such wisdom or such magnanimity of heart. But I hope we are not yet reduced to such absolute penury of both as not to be able to offer at least a genuine atmosphere of hospitality, of an earnestness to cross over our limitations and move nearer to the hearts of other peoples and understand somewhat of the significance of the endless variety of man's creative effort.

1937

TO SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

As Bengal's poet I invite you on Bengal's behalf to accept the leadership of our country. God the Preserver, says the Gita, incarnates Himself whenever need arises to protect the meek and chastise the wicked. Enmeshed in the evils of misfortune, out of the very throes of the body politic is the leader born. Trodden down under the heel of foreign domination, her energies dissipated by internal divisions, Bengal's destiny is today darkened by ever deepening clouds.

Divided against ourselves we are weak at home while the adverse forces mobilise outside Bengal's frontiers. Our economy, our method of work, our moral tone are woefully inadequate. Our politics is like a boat in which the oars do not keep time with the helm. When the mind is ridden by an evil fate it acts like virus in a worn-out body. That is how we become divided against ourselves, we throw out our well-wishers, make strangers of friends, insult those who are worthy of respect, and, in this way weaken our own ranks from the rear.

Just at the moment when it devolves upon each one of us to raise by dint of our own worth the lofty pinnacle of our national glory and place it high before the eyes of the whole world, some malicious self-seekers there are, who in their suicidal stupidity dig holes of calumny into the very foundation of the structure. Maligning one another, they serve only to strengthen the insolence of the enemy.

When there is a wound from outside, the festering sore rouses all the venom that lie dormant inside the body and precipitates a sepsis. Worn out by this conspiracy of between the forces of disease inside and outside the body, our mind becomes inert and cannot fully exert itself for its immunity. At such times of crisis what we need most is the protecting right arm of self-reliant strong men, who can, with impunity, overside the obstacle of an adverse fate that may lie on the road of our triumphant march.

Subhas Chandra, I have watched you from afar when you first began your penance for the country. In that dawn of your *sadhana*, in the uncertain twilight, I was assailed by misgivings about you. I have felt hesitant to place my full faith in you. Your blunders, your weaknesses have caused me pain. Today you are revealed in the clear light of the midday sun—there is no room for doubt to darken the sky. In your lifetime you have absorbed many an experience. Your adherence to duty is a positive proof of your vitality and strength. Incarceration, banishment, incurable disease—all these have sorely tested this strength. They were powerless to overcome you. Rather have they broadened your mind and you have emerged out of these trials with a vision that reaches beyond the bounds of the country and encompasses—the extensive grounds of world history. You have made allies out of your troubles and obstacles have proved to be so many steps in the ladder of your success. That you could do so, was owing to your refusal to accept defeat. We, in Bengal, need to emulate this strength of character more than anything else.

For various reasons Bengal has been denied of many opportunities by her own people and by those who are strangers to the land. We desire that by her own courage and initiative Bengal should forge blessings out of this course of fate. Let her determination not to accept apparent defeat, lead Bengal to her triumph.

As I look around, I see the hands of a cruel fate working in every walk of life in Bengal. In the face of this unkind destiny, we should bravely affirm that we have within our own character that ingredient wherewith to build our fort of resistance. We can save ourselves if only we can break open the lock and deliver this source of strength that lies within. Astride the ferocious shark of evil times we shall have to cross the sea of nightmare. It is with the hope that you will uphold our courage that I now call upon you to lead us in the path of this dare-devil adventure. Howsoever difficult be the goal, if we but persevere in our united effort, we shall reach the end.

It is here that the crux of the problem lies. But why should we use that conditional if, why should we give way to misgivings? Unite we must if the nation is to survive. It is up to you to rouse the determination, throughout the length and breadth of the country, that Bengal will not die humiliated by fate, that Bengal will raise its proud head above the buffetings of misfortune. You are the spirit of tireless youth, you have in your nature that unflinching courage which can uphold hope in the face of an impending crisis. In the faith that you will implant in the soil of Bengal that banner of death-triumphing hope, that flag of fearless freedom, I welcome you to be the leader of the country.

Let Bengal's millions speak in one voice, in firm and clear accents that the seat of leadership is ready for you. May you resolve the spirit of mutual mistrust in the Bengalee, may his diffidence be over. May your example put meanness and niggardly conduct to ignominy and shame. Let Bengal, through upholding and maintaining her self-respect in victory and again in defeat, uphold and maintain the prestige of her accredited leader.

The Bengalee is a logician born. He delights in hairsplitting arguments. Right from the commencement of a project to its very end, he finds a peculiar pleasure in sitting in opposition and refuting the other man's viewpoint in the pride of his sterile intellect. He is more interested in picking holes and finding faults than in taking a comprehensive view of things. He forgets that his controversies lead nowhere, that they are the unproductive luxuriance of an idle mind. The need of the day is not arguments but a spontaneous will to do things. Let the composite will of the nation that appoints you to the leader mould you to the great responsibility that devolves upon such leadership. May the whole nation find its self-expression in your person.

I have seen during the Bengal partition movement how that will expressed itself in its resistance to ward off the impending blow of the scimitar which sought to sever the body politic of Bengal. Bengal rose like one man against the mighty power of the Crown. Her people did not then sit idle and deliberate in the fashion of wiseacres as to whether it was possible to oppose and defeat

(circumvent) the design of the foreign power. What she did then was to will with all her heart.

In the years that followed I have seen that very desire burning strong and bright in the heart of the younger generation. They were born with the fire. But alas! the fire that should have lit the lamps and given us light was the fire used to burn and destroy. They paid dearly for the mistake. They themselves were consumed by the flames and after the conflagration was over, there remained no light to guide the benighted. But misguided though it was, the heroism that they showed even in the tragic futility of their blunder, was something which I did not see anywhere in India at that time. The series of sacrifices that they made, the way they braved misfortunes one after another, the precious lives that they lay down at the altar of the country—these have all been burnt into the ashes of futility. But, they have, nevertheless, despite the immediate results, proved for all time to come that invincible will-power of Bengal.

The agents of law and order might well try to darken these chapters of history punctuated by the heart-rending blunders of the restless youth. But, try as they may, they can never black out the radiance inherent in the spirit of youth.

True, we have seen many signs of weakness of our country. Our hope lies deep in the recesses of her being where her sources of secret strength awaits the future hour. It is up to you to see that this hope materialises and comes to fruition. All that is best in Bengalee character—his pleasant and affectionate nature, his imagination, his penetrating vision, his talent in creative arts, the power he has of absorbing the gifts of an alien culture—all these should no longer be allowed to remain abstractions, but should be harnessed for actual work. It is for you to create a new springtime of sprouting hopes. You are to deliver the country from all that is worn out and old, all that is steeped in darkness.

You may say that the work of such magnitude is not for one man to undertake single-handed. That is true. It is also a fact that this work cannot be done by men working in separate units. Nothing will be impossible to achieve if the whole country could come together drawn by the centripetal force of a towering personality. Those who are real and natural leaders of the country, never stand by themselves. They belong to all men of all times. They stand on the crest of the present and are the very first to bow in obeisance to the first purple rays that usher the dawning future. Keeping that in mind I invite you and through you the whole nation to give a lead to the country.

Let no one misapprehend that in my provincial pride I want to separate Bengal from the rest of India or that I want to place anybody on a seat of rivalry with the Mahatma who has brought in a new age in the realm of politics and has thus made India's name famous in the comity of nations. My appeal is being made today because I want Bengal fully and substantially to co-operate with India and because I want this valuable co-operation to bear real fruit. I do not wish that a powerless and weak Bengal should lag behind empty-handed

while the other provinces bring their own offerings to the Motherland. Through your *sadhana* let Bengal's self-dedication be true and noble, let her lamps of offering shine with her own true light.

Many years ago while addressing another meeting I had the occasion to convey my message of welcome to the leader of Bengal, yet to be. After so many years I take the occasion to welcome him in the very person. I am no longer capable, nor do I have the strength necessary to co-operate, body and soul, with the leader in doing actual field work. As one of the very last duties left to me I may only invoke the will of the country and may pray that that will might actuate and strengthen your will. And then I shall bless you and take your leave to go, knowing full well that you have made your country's sorrows your own and that the deliverance of the country comes apace carrying along with it your ultimate reward and recognition.

1939

CONVOCATION ADDRESS AT GURUKULA KANGRI

I REGRET THAT my feeble body and a distressing malady donot allow me the pleasure of being present at this great gathering when the *Snatakas* of this University will be bidding farewell to their Alma Mater and go out boldly into the wide world fortified with the knowledge they have gathered at the feet of their masters. I wish them all success in their endeavours of the future and I bless them with all my heart.

That aspect of our education which has drawn my attention very considerably ever since I took to the arduous task of being a teacher I would like to emphasize once more before you. I am aware that I shall be repeating myself but that is inevitable for one at my age.

As a people we must be fully conscious of what we are. It is a truism to say that the consciousness of the unity of a people implies the knowledge of its parts as well of its whole. But, most of us not only have no such knowledge of India, they do not even have an eager desire to cultivate it.

By asserting our national unity with vehemence in our political propaganda, we assure ourselves that we possess it, and thus continue to live in a make-believe world of political day-dreams.

The fact is, we have a feeble human interest in our own country. We love to talk about politics and economics; we are ready to soar into the thin air of academic abstractions, or roam in the dusk of pedantic wildernesses; but we never care to cross our social boundaries and come to the door of our neighbouring communities, personally to enquire how they think and feel and express themselves, and how they fashion their lives.

The love of man has its own hunger for knowing. Even if we lack this concerning our fellowbeings in India, except in our political protestations, at least love of knowledge for its own sake could have brought us close to each other. But there also we have failed and suffered. For weakness of knowledge is the foundation of weakness of power. Until India becomes fully distinct in our mind, we can never gain her in truth; and where truth is imperfect, love can never have its full sway. The best function of our Education Centres is to help us to know ourselves; and then along with it, her other mission will be fulfilled which is to inspire us to give ourselves.

What has given such enormous intellectual power to Europe is her co-ordination of minds. She has evolved a means by which all countries of that continent can think together. Such a great concert of ideas, by its own pressure of movement, naturally wears away all her individual aberrations of thought and extravagances of unreason. It keeps her flights of fancy close to the limits of reticence. All her different thought rays have been focussed in one common culture, which finds its complete expression in all the European universities.

The mind of India, on the other hand, is divided and scattered; there is

no one common pathway along which we can reach it. We cannot but look with regret at the feebleness of stimulation in our academic training for the forming of our mind which in co-operation of knowledge and sympathy may comprehend the larger mind of the country. The most important object of our educational institutions is to help each student to realize his personality, as an individual representing his people, in such a broad spirit, that he may know how it is the most important fact of his life for him to have been born to the great world of man.

We in India are unfortunate in not having the chance to give expression to the best in us in creating intimate relations with the powerful peoples of the world. The bond between the nations today is made of the links of mutual menace, its strength depending upon the force of panic, and leading to an enormous waste of resources in a competition of browbeating and bluff. Some great voice is waiting to be heard which will usher in the sacred light of truth in the dark region of the nightmare of politics. But we in India have not yet had the chance. Yet we have our own human voice which truth demands. Even in the region where we are not invited to act we have our right to judge and to guide the mind of man to a proper point of view, to the vision of ideality in the heart of the real.

[1941]

CRISIS IN CIVILIZATION

TODAY I COMPLETE eighty years of my life. As I look back on the vast stretch of years that lie behind me and see in clear perspective the history of my early development, I am struck by the change that has taken place both in my own attitude and in the psychology of my countrymen—a change that carries within it a cause of profound tragedy.

Our direct contact with the larger world of men was linked up with the contemporary history of the English people whom we came to know in those earlier days. It was mainly through their mighty literature that we formed our ideas with regard to these newcomers to our Indian shores. In those days the type of learning that was served out to us was neither plentiful nor diverse, nor was the spirit of scientific enquiry very much in evidence. Thus their scope being strictly limited, the educated of those days had recourse to English language and literature. Their days and nights were eloquent with the stately declamations of Burke, with Macaulay's long-rolling sentences; discussions centred upon Shakespeare's drama and Byron's poetry and above all upon the large-hearted liberalism of the nineteenth-century English politics.

At the time though tentative attempts were being made to gain our national independence, at heart we had not lost faith in the generosity of the English race. This belief was so firmly rooted in the sentiments of our leaders as to lead them to hope that the victor would of his own grace pave the path of freedom for the vanquished. This belief was based upon the fact that England at the time provided a shelter to all those who had to flee from persecution in their own country. Political martyrs who had suffered for the honour of their people were accorded unreserved welcome at the hands of the English. I was impressed by this evidence of liberal humanity in the character of the English and thus I was led to set them on the pedestal of my highest respect. This generosity in their national character had not yet been vitiated by Imperialist pride. About this time, as a boy in England, I had the opportunity of listening to the speeches of John Bright, both in and outside Parliament. The large-hearted, radical liberalism of those speeches, overflowing all narrow national bounds, had made so deep an impression on my mind that something of it lingers even today, even in these days of graceless disillusionment.

Certainly that spirit of abject dependence upon the charity of our rulers was no matter for pride. What was remarkable, however, was the wholehearted way in which we gave our recognition to human greatness even when it revealed itself in the foreigner. The best and noblest gifts of humanity cannot be the monopoly of a particular race or country; its scope may not be limited nor may it be regarded as the miser's hoard buried underground. That is why English literature which nourished our minds in the past, does even now convey its deep resonance to the recesses of our heart.

It is difficult to find a suitable Bengali equivalent for the English word

'civilization'. That phase of civilization with which we were familiar in this country has been called by Manu '*Sadachar*' (*lit.* proper conduct), that is, the conduct prescribed by the tradition of the race. Narrow in themselves these time-honoured social conventions originated and held good in a circumscribed geographical area, in that strip of land, Brahmavarta by name, bound on either side by the rivers Saraswati and Drisadvati. That is how a pharisaic formalism gradually got the upper hand of free thought and the ideal of 'proper conduct' which Manu found established in Brahmavarta steadily degenerated into socialized tyranny.

During my boyhood days the attitude of the cultured and educated section of Bengal, nurtured on English learning, was charged with a feeling of revolt against these rigid regulations of society. A perusal of what Rajnarain Bose has written describing the ways of the educated gentry of those days will amply bear out what I have said just now. In place of these set codes of conduct we accepted the ideal of 'civilization' as represented by the English term.

In our own family this change of spirit was welcomed for the sake of its sheer rational and moral force and its influence was felt in every sphere of our life. Born in that atmosphere, which was moreover coloured by our intuitive bias for literature, I naturally set the English on the throne of my heart. Thus passed the first chapters of my life. Then came the parting of ways accompanied with a painful feeling of disillusion when I began increasingly to discover how easily those who accepted the highest truths of civilization disowned them with impunity whenever questions of national self-interest were involved.

There came a time when perforce I had to snatch myself away from the mere appreciation of literature. As I emerged into the stark light of bare facts, the sight of the dire poverty of the Indian masses rent my heart. Rudely shaken out of my dreams, I began to realize that perhaps in no other modern state was there such hopeless dearth of the most elementary needs of existence. And yet it was this country whose resources had fed for so long the wealth and mangnificence of the British people. While I was lost in the contemplation of the great world of civilization, I could never have remotely imagined that the great ideals of humanity would end in such ruthless travesty. But today a glaring example of it stares me in the face in the utter and contemptuous indifference of a so-called civilized race to the well-being of crores of Indian people.

That mastery over the machine, by which the British have consolidated their sovereignty over their vast Empire, has been kept a sealed book, to which due access has been denied to this helpless country. And all the time before our very eyes Japan has been transforming herself into a mighty and prosperous nation. I have seen with my own eyes the admirable use to which Japan has put in her own country the fruits of this progress. I have also been privileged to witness, while in Moscow, the unsparing energy with which Russia has tried to fight disease and illiteracy, and has succeeded in steadily liquidating ignorance and poverty, wiping off the humiliation from the face of a vast continent. Her civilization is free from all invidious distinction between one

class and another, between one sect and another. The rapid and astounding progress achieved by her made me happy and jealous at the same time. One aspect of the Soviet administration which particularly pleased me was that it provided no scope for unseemly conflict of religious difference nor set one community against another by unbalanced distribution of political favours. That I consider a truly civilized administration which impartially serves the common interests of the people.

While other imperialist powers sacrifice the welfare of the subject races to their own national greed, in the USSR I found a genuine attempt being made to harmonise the interests of the various nationalities that are scattered over its vast area. I saw peoples and tribes, who, only the other day, were nomadic savages being encouraged and indeed trained, to avail themselves freely of the benefits of civilization. Enormous sums are being spent on their education to expedite the process. When I see elsewhere some two hundred nationalities—which only a few years ago were at vastly different stages of development—marching ahead in peaceful progress and amity, and when I look about my own country and see a very highly evolved and intellectual people drifting into the disorder of barbarism, I cannot help contrasting the two systems of governments, one based on co-operation, the other on exploitation, which have made such contrary conditions possible.

I have also seen Iran, newly awakened to a sense of national self-sufficiency, attempting to fulfil her own destiny freed from the deadly griding-stones of two European powers. During my recent visit to that country I discovered to my delight that Zoroastrians who once suffered from the fanatical hatred of the major community and whose rights had been curtailed by the ruling power were now free from this age-long repression, and that civilized life had established itself in the happy land. It is significant that Iran's good fortune dates from the day when she finally disentangled herself from the meshes of European diplomacy. With all my heart I wish Iran well.

Turning to the neighbouring kingdom of Afghanistan I find that though there is much room for improvement in the field of education and social development, yet she is fortunate in that she can look forward to unending progress; for none of the European powers, boastful of their civilization, has yet succeeded in overwhelming and crushing her possibilities.

Thus while these other countries were marching ahead, India, smothered under the dead weight of British administration, lay static in her utter helplessness. Another great and ancient civilization for whose recent tragic history the British cannot disclaim responsibility, is China. To serve their own national profit the British first doped her people with opium and then appropriated a portion of her territory. As the world was about to forget the memory of this outrage, we were painfully surprised by another event. While Japan was quietly devouring North China, her act of wanton aggression was ignored as a minor incident by the veterans of British diplomacy. We have also witnessed from this distance how actively the British statesmen acquiesced in the destruction of the Spanish Republic.

On the other hand, we also noted with admiration how a band of valiant Englishmen laid down their lives for Spain. Even though the English had not aroused themselves sufficiently to their sense of responsibility towards China in the Far East, in their own immediate neighbourhood they did not hesitate to sacrifice themselves to the cause of freedom. Such acts of heroism reminded me over again of the true English spirit to which in those early days I had given my full faith, and made me wonder how imperialist greed could bring about so ugly a transformation in the character of so great a race.

Such is the tragic tale of the gradual loss of my faith in the claims of the European nations to civilization. In India the misfortune of being governed by a foreign race is daily brought home to us not only in the callous neglect of such minimum necessities of life as adequate provision for food, clothing, educational and medical facilities for the people, but in an even unhappier form in the way the people have been divided among themselves. The pity of it is that the blame is laid at the door of our own society. So frightful a culmination of the history of our people would never have been possible, but for the encouragement it has received from secret influences emanating from high places.

One cannot believe that Indians are in any way inferior to the Japanese in intellectual capacity. The most effective difference between these two eastern peoples is that whereas India lies at the mercy of the British, Japan has been spared the shadow of alien domination. We know what we have been deprived of. That which was truly best in their own civilizations the upholding of the dignity of human relationship, has no place in the British administration of this country. If in its place they have established, with baton in hand, a reign of 'law and order', in other words a policeman's rule, such mockery of civilization can claim no respect from us. It is the mission of civilization to bring unity among people and establish peace and harmony. But in unfortunate India the social fabric is being rent into shreds by unseemly outbursts of hooliganism daily growing in intensity, right under the very aegis of 'law and order'. In India, so long as no personal injury is inflicted upon any member of the ruling race, this barbarism seems to be assured of perpetuity, making us ashamed to live under such an administration.

And yet my good fortune has often brought me into close contact with really large-hearted Englishmen. Without the slightest hesitation I may say that the nobility of their character was without parallel—in no country or community have I come across such greatness of soul. Such examples would not allow me wholly to lose faith in the race which produced them. I had the rare blessing of having Andrews—a real Englishman, a real Christian and a true man—for a very close friend. Today in the perspective of death his unselfish and courageous magnanimity shines all the brighter. The whole of India remains indebted to him for innumerable acts of love and devotion. But personally speaking, I am especially beholden to him because he helped me to retain in my old age that feeling of respect for the English race with which in the past I was inspired by their literature and which I was about to lose

completely. I count such Englishmen as Andrews not only as my personal and intimate friends but as friends of the whole human race. To have known them has been to me a treasured privilege. It is my belief that such Englishmen will save British honour from shipwreck. At any rate if I had not known them, my despair at the prospect of western civilization would be unrelieved.

In the meanwhile the demon of barbarity has given up all pretence and has emerged with unconcealed fangs, ready to tear up humanity in an orgy of devastation. From one end of the world to the other the poisonous fumes of hatred darken the atmosphere. The spirit of violence which perhaps lay dormant in the psychology of the West, has at last roused itself and desecrates the spirit of Man.

The wheels of Fate will some day compel the English to give up their Indian empire. But what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery? When the stream of their centuries' administration runs dry at last, what a waste of mud and filth they will leave behind them! I had at one time believed that the springs of civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. But today when I am about to quit the world that faith has gone bankrupt altogether.

As I look around I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises. A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage.

Today we witness the perils which attend on the insolence of might; one day shall be borne out the full truth of what the sages have proclaimed:

'By unrighteousness man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root.'

1941

III

MISCELLANEOUS

A. Open Letters, Speeches, Tributes, etc.

1 THE PROBLEM OF INDIA

Myron H. Phelps, Esq.
New York

My Dear Sir,

I am exceedingly gratified to receive your very kind letter and to know of your desire for our welfare.

In regard to the assistance you expect from me, I am afraid that as I have never been used to express myself in the English language I shall not be able to give an adequate or effective idea of what I feel to be the truth about our country. However I shall attempt as best I may to give you an outline of my views, more as a response to your message of goodwill than with the hope of rendering any help in your friendly endeavours. One need not dive deep, it seems to me, to discover the problem of India; it is so plainly evident on the surface. Our country is divided by numberless differences—physical, social, linguistic, religious, and this obvious fact must be taken into account in any course which is destined to lead us into our own place among the nations who are building up the history of man. The trite maxim 'History repeats itself' is like most other sayings but half the truth. The conditions which have prevailed in India from a remote antiquity have guided its history along a particular channel, which does not and cannot coincide with the lines of evolution taken by other countries under different sets of influences. It would be a sad misreading of the lessons on the past to apply our energies to tread too closely in the footsteps of any other nation, however successful in its own career. I feel strongly that our country has been entrusted with a message which is not a mere echo of the living voices that resound from Western shores, and to be true to her trust she must realize the Divine purpose that has been manifest throughout her history; she must become conscious of the situation she has been instrumental in creating, of its meaning and possibilities.

It has ever been India's lot to accept alien races as factors in her civilization. You know very well how the case that proceeds from colour takes elsewhere a most virulent form. I need not cite modern instances of the animosity which divides white men from negroes in your own country, and excludes Asiatics from European colonies. When, however, the white-skinned Aryans on encountering the dark aboriginal races of India found themselves face to face with the same problem, the solution of which was either extermination, as has happened in America and Australia, or a modification in the social system of the superior race calculated to accommodate the inferior without the possibility of either friction or fusion, they chose the latter. Now the principle underlying this choice obviously involves mechanical arrangement of juxtaposition, not cohesion and amalgamation. By making very careful provision for the differences, it keeps them ever alive. Unfortunately,

the principle once accepted constitution of the race even after the stress of the original necessity ceases to exist.

Thus secure in her rigid system of seclusion, in the very process of inclusion, India in different periods of her history received with open arms the medley of races that pour in on her without any attempt at shutting out undesirable elements. I need not dwell at length the evils of the resulting caste system. It cannot be denied; and this is a fact which foreign onlookers too often overlook, that it has served a very useful purpose in its day and has been even up to a late age, of immense protective benefit to India.

It has largely contributed to the freedom from narrowness and intolerance which distinguishes the Hindu religion and has enabled races with widely different culture and even antagonistic social and religious usages and ideals peaceably side by side—a phenomenon which cannot fail to astonish Europeans who, with comparatively less jarring elements have struggled for ages to establish peace and harmony among themselves. But this very absence of struggle, developing into a ready acquiescence in any position assigned by the social system, has crushed individual manhood and has accustomed us for centuries not only to submit to every form of domination, but sometimes actually to venerate the power that holds us down. The assignment of the business of government almost entirely to the military class reacted upon the whole social organism by permanently, excluding the rest of the people from all political co-operation, so that now it is hardly surprising to find the almost entire absence of any feeling of common interest, any sense of national responsibility, in the general consciousness of a people of whom as a whole it has seldom been any part of their pride, their honour, their *dharma*, to take thought or stand up for their country. This completeness of stratification, this utter submergence of the lower by the higher, this immutable and all-pervading system, has no doubt imposed a mechanical uniformity upon the people but has at the same time kept their different sections inflexibly and unalterably separate, with the consequent loss of all power of adaptation and re-adjustment to new conditions and forces.

The regeneration of the Indian people, to my mind, directly and perhaps solely depends upon the removal of this condition whenever I realize the hypnotic hold which this gigantic system of cold-blooded repression has taken on the minds of our people whose social body it has so completely entwined in its endless coils that the free expression of manhood even under the direct necessity has become almost an impossibility, the only remedy that suggests itself to me and which even at this risk of uttering a truism, I cannot but repeat, is—to educate them out of their trance.

I know I shall be told that foreign dominion is also one of the things not conducive to the free growth of manhood. But it must be remembered that with us foreign dominion is not an excrescence the forcible extirpation of which will restore a condition of normal health and vigour. It has manifested itself as a political symptom of our social disease, and at present it has become necessary to us for effecting the disposal of all internal obstructive agencies.

For we have now come under the domination not of a dead system, but of a living power, which, while holding us under subjection, cannot fail to impart to us some of its own life. This vivifying warmth from outside is gradually making us conscious of our own vitality and the newly awakened life is making its way slowly, but surely, even through the barriers of caste.

The mechanical incompatibility and consequent friction between the American colonies and the parent country was completely done away with by means of a forcible severance. The external force which in the eighteenth-century-France stood to divide class from class had only to be overcome by *vis major* to bring emancipation to a homogeneous people. But here in India are working deep-seated social forces, complex internal reactions, for in no other country under the sun has such a juxtaposition of races, ideas and religions occurred and the great problem which from time immemorial India has undertaken to solve is what in the absence of a better name may be called the race problem. At the sacrifice of her own political welfare she has through long ages borne this great burden of heterogeneity, patiently working all the time to evolve out of these warring contradictions a great synthesis.

Her first effect was spent in the arrangement of vast materials, and in this she has attained a perhaps somewhat dearly bought success. Now has come the time when she must begin to build, and dead arrangements must gradually give way to living construction, organic growth. If at this stage vital help has come from the West even in the guise of an alien rule, India must submit—may welcome it, for above all she must achieve her life's work.

She must take it as a significant fact in her history that when on the point of being overcome with a torpor that well nigh caused her to forget the purpose of what she had accomplished, a rude shock of life should have thus burst in upon her reminding her of her mission and giving her strength to carry it on. It is now manifestly her destiny that East and West should find their meeting place in her ever hospitable bosom. The unification of the East which has been her splendid if unconsciously realized in order that the process may be continued with equal success and England's contribution thereto utilized to full advantage.

For us, there can be no question of blind revolution, but of steady and purposeful education. If to break up the feudal system and the tyrannical conventionalism of the Latin Church which had outraged the healthier instincts of humanity. Europe had needed the thought-impetus of the Renaissance and the fierce struggle of the Reformation, do we not in a greater degree need an overwhelming influx of higher social ideals before a place can be found for true political thinking? Must we not have the greater vision of humanity which will impel us to shake off the fetters that shackle our individual life before we begin to dream of national freedom?

It must be kept in mind, however, that there never has been a time when India completely lost sight of the need of such reformation. In fact she had no other history but the history of this social education. In the earliest dawn of her civilization there appeared amidst the fiercest conflict of races factions and

creeds, the genius of Ramachandra and Krishna introducing a new epoch of unification and tolerance and allaying the endless struggle of antagonism. India has ever since accepted them as the Divine will incarnate, because in their life and teachings her innermost truth has taken an immortal shape. Since then all the illustrious names of our country have been of those who came to bridge over the differences of colours and scriptures and to recognize all that is highest and best as the common heritage of Humanity. Such have been our Emperors Asoka and Akbar, our philosophers, Sankara and Ramanuja, our spiritual masters Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, and others not less glorious because knit closer to us in time and perspective. They belong to various sects and castes, some of them of the very 'lowest', but still they occupy the ever sacred seat of the *guru*, which is the greatest honour that India confers on her children. This shows that even in the darkest of her days the consciousness of her true power and purpose has never forsaken her.

The present unrest in India of which various accounts must have reached you, is to me one of the most helpful signs of the time. Different causes are assigned and remedies proposed by those whose spheres of activity necessarily lead them to a narrow and one-sided view of the situation—from my seclusion it seems to me clear, that it is not this or that measure, this or that instance of injustice or oppression, which is at the bottom. We have been on the whole comfortable with a comfort unknown for a long time, we have peace and protection and many of the opportunities for prosperity which thus imply, why then anguish at heart? Because the contact of East and West has done its work and quickened the dormant life of our soul.

We have begun to be dimly conscious of the value of the time we have allowed to slip by, of the weight of the clogging effete matter which we have allowed to accumulate, and are angry with ourselves. We have also begun to vaguely realize the failure of England to rise to the great occasion, and to miss more and more the invaluable cooperation which it was so clearly England's mission to offer.

And so we are troubled with a trouble which we know not yet how to name. How England can best be made to perceive that the mere establishment of the *Pax Britannica* cannot either justify or make possible her continued dominion, I have no idea; but of this I am sure that the sooner we come to our senses, and take up the broken thread of our appointed task, the earlier will come the final consummation.

1909

2 SPIRITUAL CIVILIZATION

IN EVERY AGE the spiritual ideal has found its highest expression in a few specially gifted individuals. Such are to be found in India even today, often in the most unlikely places—among the apparently sophisticated, as well as among the unlettered and outwardly uncultured—startling us with the wonderful depth of their spiritual perception and insight. I do not feel that India has lost her spiritual heritage, for it is clear to me that her highest thought and activity is still spiritual. In the old days, however, the simpler environment—the comparative freedom from so many diverse and conflicting interests—permitted of the easy permeation of this ideal, emanate though it did from a few isolated altitudes, through and through the lower strata—with the result that Truth was recognized and realized not only intellectually but also in the details of everyday life.

A distinguishing characteristic of this spiritual civilization, as I have explained in my former letter, was its inclusiveness, its all-comprehensiveness. Aliens were assimilated into the synthesis; their widely differing modes of thought and life and worship being given their due places in the scheme by a marvellous interpretative process. But while the evolution of the spirit thus proceeded upon highly complex lines, the growth of the material body went on in a simple unorganized fashion, so that the time arrived when the messages of the spirit could no longer find their way unimpeded throughout, resulting in differences of spiritual intensity, and consequent compromises and aberrations in the character of its manifestations. That is why high thinking and degenerate living are seen side by side; ideals are converted into superstitions; and the finest of inspirations reduced to grossness in action, wherever the vitalizing spiritual stream is deprived of its freedom of onward movement.

The problem of India therefore does not seem to be that of re-establishing its lost ideals, but rather of reforming its overgrown body so as to harmonise with and give free and fitting expression to its ever-living soul. In other words our problem is not spiritual but social—that of reviving, by organizing and adapting to its more complex environment, our fast disintegrating social system. It is our disorganized society which prevents our ideas and activities from being broad, the narrower self from being merged into or sacrificed for the sake of the greater—and our national experiences are being dissipated and wasted for want of a storing and co-ordinating centre. The workings of the spirit are seen as flashes but cannot be utilised as a steady flame.

In the west the situation seems to be just the opposite. There we see a highly organized body, as it were, of which the soul is dormant, or at least, not fully conscious. While our soul is in search of an adequate body for want of which it cannot give its inspirations effective shape, and succeeds only in displaying to the outside world various incongruities clothed in phantastic forms, we find the west deploring its lack of spirituality. But surely spirituality

cannot be lacking where the larger self is finding such noble expression in comfort-scorning striving, in death-defying heroism. On what can this living for ideas be based if not on spirituality? As for the want of consciousness, does not that tend more and more to be remedied by the very activities to which so efficient an organism finds itself increasingly impelled?

It is only where life is petty and scattered, and society partitioned into mutually exclusive sects that the vision of the Great is lost—it is only there that the mental horizon becomes narrow, aspirations fail to soar high, and the spirit remains steeped in a perpetual despondency. Here and there some greater soul may succeed, like a cloud-topping peak, in rising into the serene atmosphere above; but the multitudes wallowing in the slough below are as devoid of material consolations as of clarity of spiritual perception, and an unmeaning repetition of ritual is the only lifelike response of which they seem capable.

If the spiritual genius of India is not to prove futile for the purposes of humanity then it needs must seek to acquire the art of body-building. May it not be possible, in that quest, to avail ourselves of the assistance of the West without treading that slippery path of imitation which leads only to self-destruction?

16 December 1911

3 NATIONAL LANGUAGE OF INDIA

I

DEAR MR GANDHI

I can only answer in the affirmative the question you have sent to me from Motihari. Of course Hindi is the only possible national language for inter-provincial intercourse in India. But about its introduction at the Congress I think we cannot enforce it for a long time to come. In the first place it is truly a foreign language for the Madras people, and in the second, most of our politicians will find it extremely difficult to express themselves adequately in this language for no fault of their own. The difficulty will be not only for want of practice but also because political thoughts have naturally taken form in our minds in English. So Hindi will have to remain optional in our national proceedings until a new generation of politicians, fully alive to its importance, pave the way towards its general use by constant practice as a voluntary acceptance of a national obligation.

1918

II

THOUGH OF ONE Motherland, we have many mother tongues, which gives rise to the anomaly that though at heart we are united by more or less common

feelings and common reactions, we are often reduced to the humiliation of borrowing the use of a foreign speech for making ourselves understood by each other as in the present instance. I who am acknowledged by you as the poet of your land have to be interpreted to you in a language not of this land. It is imperative, therefore, to organize an all-India movement to foster and spread the growth of a language which is potentially capable of being adopted as a common medium of communication between the different provinces. I say '*communication*' and not '*expression*' advisedly. For literary expression can truly be achieved only in a language to which we are born. Whatever the national convenience of a language that can facilitate inter-cultural communication in our country, it remains a mere convenience and cannot replace the value of one's native tongue as a vehicle of intimate self-expression.

However, I hope that the language which is to claim our allegiance as the *lingua-franca* will prove and maintain its complete freedom from any communal bias.

It must truly represent the double current of Sanskrit and Persian literatures that have been working side by side for the last many centuries and must boldly enfranchise all the words that have been naturalized by long use. I have in my institution at Santiniketan provision for the teaching Hindi as well as Urdu. I used to think that Hindi and Urdu were really one language written in two different scripts, with only a slight variation in emphasis on Sanskrit or Arabic words, according to the cultural association of the people who use them. But now I am told that these two are fast growing into two different languages, mutually distrustful. I hope those who have undertaken the lead in replacing English by a national medium of communication will realize their responsibility in this respect. I wish them all success.'

27 March 1937

4 THE OBJECT AND SUBJECT OF A STORY

MY WRITINGS DO not please all my readers, but whenever they take the trouble to make me realize that fact, they usually employ a form of language in which I am no master. For this reason I never answer them.

But the letter, which has just reached me, contains to my surprise complaints, but no insults. It comes from a lady, who is a stranger to me, and it is evident that she has felt pain, though she has avoided giving it. Her letter which puts forward some questions for me to answer is unaddressed. From that I could infer that these questions come from her, as a representative of the public, and she wants the answer to be sent to the address of the same public.

First of all, she has asked me, with some dismay, what was my object in writing this story?

The answer to this is, that the true object of writing a story is story writing. In a word, I write a story because it is my wish. But this cannot be interpreted as an object, because when you say 'wish', you ignore all other aims. All the same, when people are expecting some object, it sounds like insolence, if you tell them that you have no object to speak of.

Yet, very often, an object is revealed to an onlooker which escapes the principal actor. The antelope does not know why its skin is marked; but those who write notes on the subject tell us, that the marks are there to make it less conspicuous to its pursuers. This guess may or may not be true, but it is quite evident that the object is not in the mind of the antelope.

But you may contend that the object which was in the mind of the Creator is manifested through the antelope; and that in like manner, the age in which he is born expresses its object through the author. It cannot be gainsaid, that the age acts, consciously or unconsciously, upon the author's mind, nevertheless, I assert that this action is that of an artist, not of a teacher. The age is weaving in our minds its web of many-coloured threads simply for the purpose of creation. If you must utilise it, then the object becomes yours. This modern age of our country's history has secretly touched with its brush the present author's mind, and the impressions of that touch have come out in this novel. These impressions are artistic impressions.

Let us take the example of a great writing, such as Shakespeare's Othello. If the poet were asked, what was his object in writing the play, it would drive him out of his wits of give a reply. If, after a great deal of cogitation, he came out with an answer, I am sure it would be a wrong one. If I happen to be a member of the 'Brahmin Association,' I should be certain that the poet's object was to offer sound advice to the world about respect for colour distinctions. If I am opposed to the emancipation of women, I should say that the poet wanted to prove the mistake of allowing women to mix freely with men. If I have a strong prejudice against the poet's moral ideals and intelligence, then I shall have no doubt that he was trying to prove, that devotion to one's husband leads to terrible consequences, or else that this play was a cruel irony against the simplicity of noble minds and a vindication of the villainy of Iago. But the real thing is this,—he has written a play. No doubt, the poet's likes and dislikes lie inherent in his work, and also the genius of his age and country,—not in the shape of moral lessons, but of artistic creation. That is to say, these belong to the very life and beauty of the play. When I see a Bengali before me, I see him one with his race and ancestry. I see no line of cleavage between his individuality and his race. So, also, in a poet's works, the individuality and the environment are vitally blended.

This is why I was saying that, when I am writing a story, my contemporary experience is woven into its fabric and also my personal likes and dislikes. But their coloured threads, tinged with life's own colour, are simply the materials

which the artist has in his hands to use. If you read any object into the work, it is not mine but your own.

Rich men use the tails of yaks for making whisks; but the poor yak knows that the tail belongs to its own vital organizations and to cut it off and make it into an 'object' is absolutely alien to its nature.

My next point is that, when there is a conflict between my own ideals and those of my readers, the reader has the advantage of being able to inflict punishment. When a child has a fall, it kicks at the floor on which it fell; and it is a well-known fact that the generality of readers follow the same rule. But that the punishment is always just and inevitable, I do not admit.

Grown-up people may not be afraid of ghosts. They may even think it harmful to foster the fear of ghosts. Yet, when a grown up person reads a ghost story, he need not remember all this. For, in a story, the question of opinion does not matter; it is the enjoyment which is important.

When a man of real culture, who is a Christian judges some image of a Hindu god made by a Hindu artist, it will be a real help to him to forget, for the time, that he is a missionary. But, if unfortunately he cannot do so, then he must not blame the Hindu artist; for the latter naturally paints his picture according to his own faith and tradition; nevertheless, because it is a picture, there is something in it which is above his faith and tradition and that is the living spirit. If that spirit is unacceptable to one who is not a Hindu, then it is either due to the insensibility of the critic, in which case he is to blame, or it is due to the deficiency in the inspiration itself, in which case the blame must rest with the artist.

Englishmen have a special kind of kerosene lamp. Hindus had lamps of their own before these English lamps were introduced. The difference here lies in the lamps; but light is light, both to the Hindu and to the Englishman. There is every likelihood of a difference of opinion between my countrymen and myself as to what is good for my country. But if my story is a story, then, in spite of my opinions, it will float.

When, however, the opinions are of such a nature, that they cannot but deeply concern my readers, it would be foolish to expect from them that perfect detachment of mind which is necessary for true appreciation, and in that case, the lamp which bears the light becomes more important than the light itself.

Let us agree to this.

Then what is the advice which the author must follow? Should he change his opinion altogether with regard to the good and bad of his country? If his readers are incapable of doing so, simply for the sake of the story, what obligation has the author to play such more somersaults, simply for the sake of his readers? But if it is maintained that the cause of one's country is greater than the perfection of a story, then this holds good for the reader as well as for the writer.

It is the paramount duty of the author to fix his attention only on the perfecting of his story, not on the applause of his reading public. But if this

duty, for some reason or other, becomes impossible, then let him think what is good for his country, and not merely that his country should think him good.

The second question which the writer puts is whether the story of this novel is imaginary or whether it has its basis in actual fact; and if the latter, then does that fact belong to some orthodox Hindu family,—or to some sect enamoured of its western culture?

My answer is,—the story portion, like that contained in most of my writings, is imaginary. But that is not a complete answer to my correspondent. There is an implication hidden in the question that such events as I have described are impossible in orthodox Hinduism.

An exact coincidence of an imaginary story with some real fact is nowhere possible, either in an orthodox family, or in a family that has drifted away from orthodoxy. You can merely gossip about things that have actually happened in some family; you cannot write a story about them.

The possibilities that lie deep in human nature are the basis of the plots of all the best stories and dramas in literature. There is external truth in human nature itself, but not in mere events. Events happen in a different manner in different places. They are never the same on two occasions. But man's nature, which is at the root of these events, is the same in all ages; therefore the author keeps his eye fixed on human nature and avoids all exact copying of actual events.

The question reduces itself to this, whether human nature in orthodox Hindu families always follows the direction of the orthodox Hindu code. Does it never, on any provocation whatever, break away from its tether and run wild?

It is a matter of common observation, from the Vedic period up to the present, that the fight is endless between the outbreak of nature on the one hand and man's heroic remedies on the other. If there exists a Hindu society, where such a fight is altogether impossible, its address is concealed from us. Then further, one must know that where there is no possibility of evil, there can be no place for good. If it is absolutely impossible for a member of an orthodox Hindu family to go wrong, then the members of that family are neither good nor bad, but puppets worked by the texts of ancient scriptures.

We have seen the ugliest calumnies against women written in old Sanskrit verses, such as are rare in those authors who are proud of their western culture. This proves that our modern Bengali writers have a genuine regard for women. At the same time, one must fully admit that these ancient calumnies may be wrong, when applied to the whole of womankind. But if they were untrue even with regard to individual women, how did they come to be written at all?

So our discussion narrows itself down to this point, whether the impulse for evil, which is a fact of human nature, can be a proper subject for literature. The answer to this question has been given by literature itself, through all ages and all countries, and therefore it will not matter if I remain silent about it.

Unfortunately, in Bengali, the criticism of literature has resolved itself into a judgment of the proprieties which are necessary for orthodoxy. Our

critics go to the extreme tenuity of debate as to the excellence of Bankim's heroines in their strict conformity with the canons of Hinduism. Whether the indignation which Bhramar showed against her husband took away from the transcendental preciosity of her Hindu womanhood; whether the inability of Surjamukhi to accept, as her friend, her co-wife, Kunda, has cheapened the value of her Hindu character; how far Sakuntala is the perfect Hindu woman and Dushyanta the perfect Hindu king,—these are the questions seriously discussed in the name of literary criticism. Such criticism can only be found in our country, among all the countries of the world.

There are a crowd of heroines in Shakespeare's dramas, but their excellence is not judged according to their peculiar English qualities; and even the most fanatical Christian theologians desist from awarding them marks, in order of merit, according to their degree of Christianity. But possibly I am spoiling my own cause by admitting this, because our modern Bengali takes a special pride in thinking that India has nothing in common with the rest of the world.

But India is not a creation of the Bengalis, and it had already existed before we began our literary criticism. The classification of heroines which we find in the rhetoric of ancient India, was not in accordance with the models put forward in the Laws of Manu. I am not for such classification at all, because literature is not science; if in literature heroes and heroines are introduced according to certain classified types, then such literature becomes a toy shop, not an ideal world of living creatures. If one must indulge in this absurd mania for classification, even in literature, then at least it should follow the line of human nature as much as possible, instead of being arranged on the wooden shelves of what is Hindu, and what is not.

My last request to my correspondent is this, that she should take me seriously when I say that I love my country. If I did not, then it would have been quite easy for me to become popular with my countrymen.

1918

5 HINDU INTERCASTE MARRIAGE

SIR,

In answer to your letter dated the 8th December, I hasten to answer that Hon. Mr Patel's Bill has my heartiest support.

It is humiliating to find that some of our countrymen are opposing this Bill under the notion that it will injure Hindu Society if it is passed. They do not seem to consider that those who are already willing to accept the social martyrdom should not have any further coercion, passive or active, from any governing power, to oblige them to observe against their will such conventions as are not based upon the foundation of moral laws. To say that Hindu Society

cannot exist unless it has victims who are forcibly compelled to live the life of falsehood and cowardice, is tantamount to saying that it should not exist at all. Moreover, such an implication is a libel against the spirit of Hinduism, which all through its history has been accommodating differences of creeds and customs, allowing mixture of castes and making new social adjustments from the time of the Mahabharat until now when an alien Government has nearly succeeded in petrifying our social body with its rigid laws, depriving it of life's flexibleness and thus hastening its fatal stage of senility. No doubt, society everywhere looks upon with suspicion and treats with hostility those men who choose to think and act for themselves, who have an invincible love for intellectual and moral freedom. But the community, which goes beyond all limits of endurance, which takes every step to make it impossible for such men to live within its pale, the men who have the courage and honesty of their conviction and are, therefore, best fitted to fight for truth and righteousness is doomed to breed in terminable generations of slaves. Where the society is terribly effective in its weapons of persecution it is shameful to appeal to a foreign Government to stiffen by its sanction a social tyranny, to rob people of their right to the freedom of conscience and in the next moment to ask from the same Government a wider political emancipation. Those who feel no compunction in invoking the organized power of the State to compel or help by its connivance a weak minority to submit to the worst form of social slavery, can certainly not be held as fit to claim a large share of such power.

19 December 1918

6 VERNACULARS FOR THE M.A. DEGREE

It is needless to say that it has given me great delight to learn of Sir Ashutosh's proposal for introducing Indian vernaculars in the university for the M.A. But at the same time I must frankly admit the misgivings I feel owing to my natural distrust of the spirit of teaching that dominates our university education. Vernacular literature, at least in Bengal, has flourished in spite of its being ignored by the higher branches of our educational organization. It carried no prospect of reward for its votaries from the Government, nor, in its first stages, any acknowledgment even from our own people. This neglect has been a blessing in disguise, for thus our language and literature have had the opportunity of natural growth, unhampered by worldly temptation, or imposition of outside authority. Our literary language is still in a fluid stage, it is continually trying to adapt itself to new accessions of thought and emotion and to the constant progress in our national life. Necessarily the changes in our life and ideas are more rapid than they are in the countries whose

influences are contributing to build the modern epoch of our renaissance. And, therefore, our language, the principal instrument for shaping and storing our ideals, should be allowed to remain much more plastic than it need be in the future when standards have already been formed which can afford a surer basis for our progress.

But I have found that the direct influence which the Calcutta University wields over our language is not strengthening and vitalizing, but pedantic and narrow. It tries to perpetuate the anachronism of preserving the Pundit-made Bengali swathed in grammar-wrappings borrowed from a dead language. It is every day becoming a more formidable obstacle in the way of our boys' acquiring that mastery of their mother tongue which is of life and literature. The artificial language of a learned mediocrity, inert and formal, ponderous and didactic, devoid of the least breath of creative vitality, is forced upon our boys at the most receptive period of their life. I know this, because I have to connive, myself, at a kind of intellectual infanticide when my own students try to drown the natural spontaneity of their expression under some stagnant formalism. It is the old man of the sea keeping his fatal hold upon the youth of our country. And this makes me apprehensive lest the stamping of death's seal upon our living language should be performed on a magnified scale by our university as its final act of tyranny at the last hour of its direct authority.

In the modern European universities the medium of instruction being the vernacular, the students in receiving, recording and communicating their lessons perpetually come into intimate touch with it, making its acquaintance where it is not slavishly domineered over by one particular sect of academicians. The personalities of various authors, the individualities of their styles, the revelation of the living power of their language are constantly and closely brought to their minds—and therefore all that they need for their final degrees is a knowledge of the history and morphology of their mother-tongues. But our students have not the same opportunity, excepting in their private studies and according to their private tastes. And therefore their minds are more liable to come under the influence of some inflexible standard of language manufactured by pedagogues and not given birth to by the genius of artists. I assert once again that those who, from their position of authority, have the power and the wish to help our language in the unfolding of its possibilities, must know that in its present stage freedom of movement is of more vital necessity than fixedness of forms.

Being an outsider I feel reluctant to make any suggestions, knowing that they may prove unpractical. But as that will not cause an additional injury to my reputation, I make bold to offer you at least one suggestion. The candidates for the M.A. degree in the vernaculars should not be compelled to attend classes, because in the first place, that would be an insuperable obstacle to a great number of students, including ladies who have entered the married state; secondly, the facility of studying Bengali under the most favorable conditions cannot be limited to one particular institution, and the research work which should comprehend different dialects and folk literature can best

be carried out outside the class; and lastly, if such freedom be given to the students, the danger of imposing upon their minds the dead uniformity of some artificial standard will be obviated. For the same reason, the university should not make any attempt, by prescribing definite text-books, to impose or even authoritatively suggest any particular line of thought to the students, leaving each to take up the study of any prescribed subject,—grammar, philology, or whatever it may be, along the line best suited to his individual temperament, judging of the result according to the quantity of conscientious work done and the quality of the thought-processes employed.

1918

7 'THIS YOUTH WHICH LIES HIDDEN IN MY HEART'

It has given me great delight to be invited to this meeting for various reasons. In the first place, I have not been used to the four walls of meeting places, but I feel at home under the shades of great trees. It is needless for me to say to you that I am a great lover of nature. [Hear, hear.] And then again, the meeting here, under these large trees, of so many students is of really great gratification to me. For, let me make a confession to you—that I love all young men of all countries—young students especially. Please do not think that this is a piece of condescention from the hoary altitude of my age. [Laughter.] I have a genuine love for all young beings, as I told you. For, I feel in the inner core of my being the eternal presence of youth. Believe it that I feel in my heart of hearts that I have this gift of youth given to me. And this, though I have witnesses who bear false evidence [laughter] against this;—I mean my grey beard and hair, which—like professional witnesses in the law courts, whose profession it is to give false evidence [laughter]—contradict my inner youthfulness. [Hear, hear.] And I wish I could lay it open before your view,—this youth which lies hidden in my heart. I suppose it is difficult for you to believe that time is not absolutely fixed. I mean that a year does not consist of 365 days in all cases. The figure '20' is '20,' absolutely '20' and it can never be a day more than 20; or 57 cannot be less than 57 to you. Well, I suppose you have studied mathematics too much [laughter] and neglected poetry [laughter]. This gross superstition has been made firm in your mind. But time is elastic. There are men who are old, old not in the tenth century after Christ or tenth century before Christ, but in the 20th I mean; and some who are 57 like myself, but in reality not older than '27',—let us say. And so I find that I get on very well with all youngmen everywhere. And I am fortunate enough to see that in all places, they themselves had found out this weakness in me. They know that I love young people; I get on very well with them, better than with people who are of my own age [Laughter], because I find that most of the old men of my age

have *opinions*. That is a great nuisance—I can tell you. [Laughter] I have not got any *opinions* till now; and, sometimes, people come to me and they think that I am old enough to give them advices and to tell my 'opinions' about things; and I have to look very grave and wise. But unfortunately I have to disappoint them. I say I have no 'opinions.' Opinions have not been formed in me, I do not know how to give advice. And so they have very scant respect for me; but, as I say, I am quite at home among students of all communities; and it is because they are so receptive and their minds not only receive the light, but also reflect it. And it is a great privilege to come in close contact with all young minds. It is a privilege which very few old people possess. They keep aloof from the young, and the young also keep aloof from the old. And that is unfortunate. But you know I have been living not only among the trees, but among the young boys, my own students. I have been fortunate enough to find my place in the heart of Nature, in the heart of the Youth of my country [Hear, hear]. And that is what makes it so fitting that the students of this place should invite me to this delightful spot, under the shade of these great trees. I have to thank you for this with all my heart, and I wish I could fittingly express my gratitude and my love to you in proper language. But you know this platform makes one feel so unnatural. This posture is not at all favourable for thinking or for giving expression to one's thoughts; and then the language is a great barrier. From my infancy I have been used to sitting quiet in secluded spots and thinking out my thoughts and giving expression to them. And I feel quite like a fish out of water when you put me up on the height of a wooden platform, [Laughter] and you ask me to address you in a language to which I was not born. And so, to save you from the infliction of a formal speech, I have to make it as brief as possible. [No, No.] This is my one little way of paying you back your kindness. Please don't think that I am wanting in the sense of gratitude and love, because I am wanting in my power to express my emotion in *English*; [Laughter] and with these few words I beg to take my seat, and thank you for all the good things you have spoken of me at this meeting, a great part of which has remained unintelligible to me though I could enter into the spirit of it; and it has come to me like the sunshine through the shade of the trees and yet beautiful through them; and your kindness has beamed upon me through your own language, through the barrier of a language which I do not understand, yet mellowing all that you have said, the kind words, the praises, and making it beautiful to my ears. And this is all that I can say to you; and I make you my *Namaskar*.—[*Report by* Mr S.G. Narasimhayya in *Karnataka*]

1919

8 ON SOME EDUCATIONAL QUESTIONS

I UNIVERSITIES

(1) *Professors*:— While for the routine work of the University classes, men may be appointed, as Assistant Professors, in consideration of their academical titles and diplomas, it would be a most serious blunder to select Professors for higher work on the same principle. For the latter have to be the leaders and directors of thought. And none but such as have given unquestionable proof of originality and genius should be placed in such positions. It is because of this defect in our Universities that most of them have not been the success that they should otherwise have been.

a. The right method of appointing Professors is to invite the leading writers and thinkers available, on any subject, irrespective of race, colour, creed or caste to deliver courses of lectures and to select the best from among such lecturers.

b. Next, such Professors, when appointed, should be bound by a condition that within *three* years they should produce some original work and that in every three years succeeding, they should continue to give evidence of thought on original lines.

c. The system of 'Exchanging' Professors of different Universities for short periods, as in America, should also be adopted.

High salaries must necessarily be paid. But that will be cheaper than the present system, which is more costly, in that it does not bring a corresponding return for the large sums spent.

(2) *Selection of Men for Specialization* :—Now-a-days men are being deputed for special study not only within the University but also to places outside. But the results such men have thus far achieved, though in some cases really brilliant, yet in most cases have not been equal to the expectation. And that is because the selection is not rightly made. Mere academic titles are not a safe guide. Nor is the selection made by authorities competent to judge of the merits of such candidates. It is only when young men have been in close touch with Professors with originality of thought, that their merits and aptitudes for *original* work can be known. And this can be judged best not by ordinary lecturers, usually known as Professors; but by those who have done original or research work.

a. There should be travelling scholarships to enable the students to visit different provinces in India collecting materials for their special studies from observation and submitting them to proper authorities.

b. Professors, engaged in research work, should select students to collaborate with them. The mechanical portions of their work, such as collecting data from different sources, collating different versions of texts, drawing up concordances, and other such tasks, should be left to these students to carry out with the guidance of their professors.

(3) *Subjects of Study* :—Another chief reason for the paucity of original thought and production in the existing Universities, is the viciousness of dividing the pupils energies and attention in the Collegiate stage. A grounding in general knowledge ought to be provided for up to the Entrance. But in the University, pupils should be allowed to bring up, for a degree, only *one* subject, in which the standard might be raised. Such a graduate will have greater depth, consequently greater love of his subject, greater aptitude for research work and better scope for manifesting originality, if he have any.

The Universities will then turn out a superior type of graduates, which alone could make for real advancement of knowledge in the land.

(4) *The Medium of Instruction in the University* :— As a general rule the mother tongue, *if it be one of the leading* vernaculars of India, should be made the medium of instruction. But the adoption of this principle should be *gradual*. The sciences cannot be immediately taught in the vernacular. It is, therefore, necessary to *bifurcate* the courses of study in the University. Pupils desirous of bringing up humanistic subjects like History, Economics, Sociology and Philosophy, should be made to get their education in the vernacular. Pupils seeking to gain degrees in Science subjects should be instructed through the medium of English. The necessary books for the humanistic subjects may be translated *at once*. In the course of ten or fifteen years, all the courses may be given in the vernacular and the 'bifurcation' abolished. English should be universally taught as a second, but *compulsory* language.

(5) *Fine arts* :— Instruction in fine Arts is an urgent necessity. For, these arts develop a province of the mind, which remains untouched by modern Indian education. This defective development of the mind of our times has seriously stunted the growth of national life.

The first step must be to organize, under the direction of experts, a 'Museum' on the most scientific lines. Articles indicative of the life and culture of all the peoples of India, must be secured and then similar articles of other races and cultures of the world, as far as possible. They must be classified according to the purposes they were or are intended to serve; so that the underlying ideas may be studied not only from economic, historical or ethnological standpoints, but also from the ethical and aesthetical.

(6) *Sanskrit Education* :— There is a false notion that Buddhistic culture is either antagonistic or alien to Hindu culture. But they are, in fact, more closely related than Aryan and Dravidian cultures. The study of the Buddhistic and the Pali literature should be combined with a study of Sanskrit literature. The Pehlavi literature should also be associated with it, for the same reason. Else, a comprehensive idea of Sanskrit *culture* cannot be attained.

II WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Women's education cannot be the same as men's for the reason that women have a special duty to discharge towards society and humanity. It is not that every woman should be made to learn the culinary art or that she should have no higher ambition than to be a cook or a house-manager. Woman has a right

to learn the sciences and arts that man learns and to enter, *as far as practicable*, the walks of life that man usually seeks. But it must not be forgotten that to her alone belongs one of the greatest privileges of life. Of Nature's endowments to man the most valuable is his 'individuality.' Its preservation and development is one of humanity's foremost concerns. This work can be done best only by woman. She must, therefore, be first trained for discharging this great duty of rearing up the real man of the future. And her studies must be subordinated to this end. Else, the very object of creation will have failed. The courses that have such an aim can be best given in the *Vernacular*.

III PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

So far as the Primary stage goes, there is something to be said in favour of the old. Hindu method of teaching pupils one subject after another. It does not mean that the child should learn nothing of history or geography for months or years when it is engaged in the study of Language of Arithmetic.When Language is taken up, it should be the one subject of special and direct instruction. But the teacher and the parents may give the child talks on various topics or subjects *incidentally* in the garden, on the road, at dinner or elsewhere.Task work must be confined only to one subject. The talks should prepare the child for receiving instruction in other subjects, later on. In the High School or Lower Secondary stage, however, a number of subjects may be taught simultaneously.

The Mother-tongue should be the medium of instruction. The fewer the text-books the better in the Primary and the Lower Secondary stage. In the High school stage vernacular text-books for all subjects should be prepared, without any further delay.

IV EDUCATION IN GENERAL

All educational development must proceed from within outwards. It is really a spiritual process, not merely an intellectual or a mechanical one. The spirit being greater than the body and even the individual mind, education is a process covering the widest area. Education is, in a real sense, the breaking of the shackles of individual narrowness. The aim must, therefore, be to develop not only the *individual* aspect of the mind but also the *universal* or the *spiritual*, which is the chief characteristic of the ancient Hindu system. It is therefore necessary to bring *together* in every educational organization, *all* the different cultures found in India and, as far as possible, all the cultures of the world, all the phases of religion and art; in which the universal mind has expressed itself in different ages and countries, i.e., to co-ordinate these various cultures without attempting the suppression of the natural differences. The highest aim of education should be to help the realization of unity, but not of uniformity. Uniformity is unnatural. And in fact, its attainment is impossible. A sound educational system should provide for the development of variety without losing the hold on the basic or spiritual unity.

Hence the idea underlying the Bolepur school is to bring together pupils of all creeds and cultures and to help them to realize their spiritual brotherhood and to develop, freely and fully at the same time, their individual and racial characteristics.

V A REAL INDIAN UNIVERSITY

There must be a place, if not in every province, at least in one centre in this vast country, to which the best intellects of India and even of the world outside, could be induced to resort, where they could meet, stay temporarily or permanently and impart their knowledge to the public. It will help to kill racial, sectarian, caste and other prejudices and be a real fountain of universal light. It is only Hindu States, whose rulers have in their veins flowing the ancient Aryan spiritual culture, based on 'unity' and 'universality' can realize its importance and organize a real university of this type, which will be India's educational contribution to the world's progress.

1919

9 'POET'S CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR NOBLE WORK'

DEAR MAHATMAJI.

Power in all its forms is irrational,—it is like the horse that drags the carriage blindfolded. The moral element in it is only represented in the man who drives the horse. Passive resistance is a force which is not necessarily moral in itself; it can be used against truth as well as for it. The danger inherent in all force grows stronger when it is likely to gain success, for then it becomes temptation.

I know your teaching is to fight against evil by the help of the good. But such a fight is for heroes and not for men led by impulses of the moment. Evil on one side naturally begets evil on the other, injustice leading to violence and insult to vengefulness. Unfortunately such a force has already been started, and either through panic or through wrath our authorities have shown us their claws whose sure effect is to drive some of us into the secret path of resentment and others into utter demoralisation. In this crisis you, as a great leader of men, have stood among us to proclaim your faith in the ideal which you know to be that of India,—the ideal which is both against the cowardliness of hidden revenge and the cowed submissiveness of the terror-stricken. You have said, as Lord Buddha has done in his time and for all time to come,—*Akkodhena jine kodham asādhum sādhunā jine*,—'Conquer anger by the power of non-anger and evil by the power of good.'

This power of good must prove its truth and strength by its fearlessness, by its refusal to accept any imposition which depends for its success upon its

power to produce frightfulness and is not ashamed to use its machines of destruction to terrorise a population completely disarmed. We must know that moral conquest does not consist in success, that failure does not deprive it of its dignity and worth. Those who believe in spiritual life know that to stand against wrong which has overwhelming material power behind it is victory itself,—it is the victory of the active faith in the ideal in the teeth of evident defeat.

I have always felt, and said accordingly, that the great gift of freedom can never come to a people through charity. We must win it before we can own it. And India's opportunity for winning it will come to her when she can prove that she is morally superior to the people who rule her by their right of conquest. She must willingly accept her penance of suffering,—the suffering which is the crown of the great. Armed with her utter faith in goodness she must stand unabashed before the arrogance that scoffs at the power of spirit.

And you have come to your motherland in the time of her need to remind her of her mission, to lead her in the true path of conquest, to purge her present day politics of its feebleness which imagines that it has gained its purpose when it struts in the borrowed feathers of diplomatic dishonesty.

This is why I pray most fervently that nothing that tends to weaken our spiritual freedom may intrude into your marching line, that martyrdom for the cause of truth may never degenerate into fanaticism for mere verbal forms, descending into the self-deception that hides itself behind sacred names.

With these few words for an introduction allow me to offer the following as a poet's contribution to your noble work:

I

Let me hold my head high in this faith that thou art our shelter, that all fear is mean distrust of thee.

Fear of man? But what man is there in this world, what king, O King of Kings, who is thy rival, who had hold of me for all time and in all truth?

What power is there in this world to rob me of my freedom? For do not thy arms reach the captive through the dungeon-walls, bringing unfettered release to the soul?

And must I cling to this body in fear of death, as a miser to his barren treasure? Has not this spirit of mine the eternal call to thy feast of everlasting life?

Let me know that all pain and death are shadows of the moment; that the dark force which sweeps between me and thy truth is but the mist before the sun-rise; that thou alone art mine for ever and greater than all pride of strength that dares to mock my manhood with its menace.

II

Give me the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer,—the courage to speak, to do, to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone.

Give me the supreme faith of love, this is my prayer,—the faith of the life in death, of the victory in defeat, of the power hidden in the frailness of beauty, of the dignity of pain that accepts hurt but disdains to return it.

1919

10 'WHEN BADGES OF HONOUR MAKE OUR SHAME GLARING'

TO LORD CHELMSFORD

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

THE ENORMITY OF the measures taken by the government in the Punjab for quelling some local disturbances has, with a rude shock, revealed to our minds the helplessness of our position as British subjects in India. The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organization for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of our people has been ignored by our rulers—possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons. The callousness has been praised by most of the Anglo-Indian papers, which have in some case gone to the brutal length of making fun of our sufferings, without receiving the least check from the same authority, relentlessly careful in smothering every cry of pain and expression of judgment from the organs representing the sufferers. Knowing that our appeals have been in vain and that the passion of vengeance is blinding the noble vision of statesmanship in our Government which could so easily afford to be magnanimous, as befitting its physical strength and normal tradition, the very least that I can do for my country is to take all consequences upon myself in giving voice to the protest of the millions of my countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror.

The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in the incongruous content of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, shorn, of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings. And these are the reasons which have compelled me to ask Your Excellency, with due deference and regret, to relieve me of my title of

knighthood which I had the honour to accept from His Majesty the King at the hands of your predecessor, for whose nobleness of heart I still entertain great admiration.

Yours faithfully,
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

30 May 1919

11 'A GREAT CRIME . . . IN THE NAME OF LAW'

A GREAT CRIME has been done in the name of law in the Punjab. Such terrible eruptions of evil leave their legacy of the wreckage of ideals behind them. What happened in Jalianwallah Bagh was itself a monstrous progeny of a monstrous war, which for years had been defiling God's world with fire and poison, physical and moral. The immenseness of the sin through which humanity had waded across its bloodred length of agony has bred collousness in the minds of those who have power in their hands with no check of sympathy within, or fear of resistence without. The cowardliness of the powerful who owned no shame in using their machines of frightfulness upon the unarmed and unwarned villagers, and inflicting unspeakable humiliations upon their fellow beings behind the screen of an indecent mockery of justice, and yet not feeling for a moment that it was the meanest form of insult to their own manhood, has become only possible through the opportunity which the late war has given to man for constantly outraging his own higher nature, trampling truth and honour under foot. This disruption of the basis of civilization will continue to produce a series of moral earthquakes, and men will have to be ready for still further sufferings. That the balance will take a long time to be restored is clearly seen by the suicidal ferocity of vengefulness ominously tinging red the atmosphere of the peace deliberations.

But we have no place in these orgies of triumphant powers rending the world into bits according to their own purposes. What most concerns us is to know that the moral degradation not only pursues the people, inflicting indignities upon the helpless, but also their victims. The dastardliness of cruel injustice confident of its impunity is ugly and mean, but the fear and impotent anger which they are apt to breed upon the minds of the weak are no less abject. Brothers, when physical force, in its arrogant faith in itself, tries to crush the spirit of man, then comes the time for him to assert that his soul is indomitable. We shall refuse to be afraid and to own moral defeat by cherishing in our hearts foul dreams of retaliation. The time has come for the victims to be the victors in the field of righteousness.

When brother spills the blood of his brother and exults in his sin, giving it a high sounding name; when he tries to keep the blood stains fresh on the

The following letter has been sent by Sir Rabindranath T[illegible]

Viceroy:

Your Excellency,

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Facsimile of the draft of Tagore's letter to Lord Chelmsford renouncing knighthood

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Yours faithfully
Rabindranath Tagore

soil as a memorial of his anger, then God in shame conceals it under His green grass and the sweet purity of this flowers. We who have witnessed the wholesale slaughter of the innocent in our neighbourhood, let us accept God's own office and cover the blood stains of iniquity with our prayer:

Rudra yat te dakshinam mukham tena mam pahinityam.

With the graciousness, O, Terrible, for ever save us.

For the true grace comes from the Terrible, who can save our souls from the fear of suffering and death in the midst of terror and from vindictiveness in defiance of injury. Let us take our lesson from His hand even when the smart of the pain and insult is still fresh—the lesson that all meanness, cruelty and untruth are for the obscurity of oblivion, and only the Noble and True are for eternity. Let those who try to burden the minds of the future with stones, carrying the black memory of wrongs and their anger, but let us bequeath to the generations to come memorials of that only which we can revere—let us be grateful to our fore-fathers, who have left us the image of our Buddha, who conquered self, preached forgiveness, and spread his love far and wide in time and space.

13 April 1920

12 ON BRITISH MENTALITY IN RELATION TO INDIA

RECENTLY I chanced to find a copy of Professor Lowes Dickenson's report of his travels in the East. It made me realize clearly the mentality of the British people in their relation to India. When the author indicates in it, the utter difference of their temperament from ours, it fills me with despair at the unnaturalness of our relationship, which is so humiliating on our side and so demoralising on theirs.

In the pamphlet, he quotes, with approval, a remark made to him by an Englishman, an officer, in India, whom he describes as 'intelligent and enlightened'. It is about the maintaining by Englishmen of an impassable social gulf between themselves and the people of India, and it says:

An Englishman cannot be expected to lose his own soul for the sake of other people's politics.

Here the author parenthetically explains the word 'soul' by saying that it denotes the habits and traditions of one's race.

All this means that Englishmen feel a sense of irreconcilable contradiction between their nature and ours; and therefore we are like twins, who, by some monstrous freak of destiny, have been tied together back to back. He concludes the summary of his Report by saying:

'But my own opinion is that India has more to gain and less to lose than any other Eastern country by contact with the West.'

He contemptuously ignores the fact that where no communication of sympathy is possible, gifts can be hurled, but not given; that while counting the number of gains by the receiver, we also have to consider the fracture of his skull; and while thanking the doctor for the rest cure, we must hasten to negotiate with the undertaker for the funeral.

It is the very irony of fate for us to be blamed by these people about the iniquity of our caste distinctions. And yet, never, in the blindness of our pride of birth, have we suggested that by coming into contact with any race of men we can lose our souls, although we may lose our caste which is a merely conventional classification. The analogy would be perfect, if the division of the railway compartments, with its inequality of privileges, was defended by the railway directors as being necessary for the salvation of the passengers' souls.

Only think in this connections of the ideal which the life of Akbar represented. This Emperor's soul was not afraid, for its own safety, of the touch of a neighbouring humanity but of the want of touch. Aurangzeb, on the other hand, who was certainly 'intelligent and enlightened' and meticulously careful about keeping intact what he considered to be his soul, represented a force, insolent and destructive. Such an enormous difference in the ideals of these two most powerful monarchs of Moghal India sprang from fundamentally different interpretations of the word 'soul'.

Lowes Dickenson has mentioned about the possibility of India being benefited by her contact with the West. Very likely he meant the contact to be like that of the root of a tree with the water in the soil. I admit the light of Europe's culture has reached us. But Europe, with its corona of culture, is a radiant idea. Its light permeates the present age, it is not shut up in a single bull's eye lantern, which is some particular people from Europe who have come to us in India, yet we are repeatedly asked to be grateful to this bull's eye lantern and prostrate ourselves before it with loyalty and reverence. But this is not possible; for it is a mere lantern, it has no soul. Not only that, but it circumscribes the light to a narrow circle of barest necessity. The full radiation of European Culture has pervaded Japan only because it has not come to her through an unnatural glare of a miserly lense, exaggerating the division between the small shining patch and the vast obscure.

It is our pride which seeks difference, and gloats upon it. But sympathy is a higher faculty, being our spiritual organ of sight: it has the natural vision of the *Advaitam*. The world is an ever moving multitude with an eternal unity of movements, which must not be retarded in any of its parts by a break of cadence. The world of man is suffering because all movements in its individual parts are not in harmony with one another and therefore with the whole: because the relationship of races has not been established in a balance of truth and goodness. This balance cannot be maintained by an external regulation, as in a puppet show. It is a dance which must have music in its heart to regulate it. This great music of love is lacking in the meeting of men which has taken

place in the present age; and all its movements in their discongruity are creating complexities of suffering.

I wish I could write to you simple letters giving our detailed news. But the world-wide agony of pain fills my mind with thoughts that obstruct natural communications of personal life.

April 1921

13 'THE EFFICACY OF AHIMSA'

LETTER TO NANALAL DALPATRAM

I BELIEVE IN the efficacy of *ahimsa* as the means of overcoming the congregated might of physical force on which the political powers in all countries mainly rest. But like every other moral principle *ahimsa* has to spring from the depth of mind and it must not be forced upon man from some outside appeal of urgent need. The great personalities of the world have preached love, forgiveness and non-violence, primarily for the sake of spiritual perfection and not for the attainment of some immediate success in politics or similar department of life. They were aware of the difficulty of their teaching being realized within a fixed period of time in a sudden and wholesale manner by men whose previous course of life had chiefly perused the path of self. No doubt through a strong compulsion of desire for some external result, men are capable of repressing their habitual inclinations for a limited time, but when it concerns an immense multitude of men of different traditions and stages of culture, and when the object for which such repression is exercised needs a prolonged period of struggle, complex in character, I cannot think it possible of attainment. The conditions of South Africa (referring to the Passive Resistence of S. Africa and those in India) are not nearly the same, and fully knowing the limitations of my powers I restrict myself to what I consider as my own vocation, never venturing to deal with blind forces which I do not know how to control.'

3 February 1922

14 MESSAGE TO THE YOUNG

I HAVE COME to the time of my dismissal from life's workshop, barred from further earning. My old age keeps me pensioner to my departed days: I am only allowed to live upon my past achievement. The thoughts that I have thought, the dreams that I have dreamed, gradually matured and came to the

season of fruitage, till some of them shrivelled and died and some were ripe for reaping and were garnered.

Though I confess that I began my youth in a comparatively remoter past from that of yours, do not imagine that I dwell in a time of dilapidated desolateness, and that I am no longer modern. Old age has not its reliable witness in any back number of the calendar, but in the stagnation of spirit that disclaims its own future.

It is cynicism, even though of the most modern make which is truly senile, for it has lost its vision of the beyond, the deeper meaning of existence. The cleverness which is up-to-date seems to exult when it proclaims that the doctrine of spirit has grown obsolete and that our present day education should rely only upon external forces and material foundations.

But I say over and over again that the impertinence of material dominion is extremely old; the revelation of spirit in Man is ever modern though born of an immemorial past. Occasionally it has its time of silence, it disappears from our view, so that its price has to be paid for winning it back.

And a poet's mission is to give breath to the voice which is yet inaudible in the air, to inspire faith in the dream which is unfulfilled; to bring the earliest tidings of the unborn flower to a doubting world.

I have often been asked for messages and it ever troubles me. It is like asking the tree to talk and the bird to lecture. As a poet it is for me only to maintain my instinct of happiness even when there is gloom on sky and land; the pulsation of light throbs in my own pulse when it vibrates in the unseen depth of the dark.

I am here to offer you that unreasoning joy of mine and a hope for life's renewal which thrills in the roots of our being when the spring unloosens the coils of the winter before we come to know it.

I hope that some profound dreamer will spring from your midst to sing a psalm of life everlasting and love that embraces all, and overcoming all differences, bridge the chasm of passions which has been widening for centuries. Age after age, in Asia great souls have heartened the world with showers of grace and immense assurance; Asia is again waiting for such world-spirits to come and carry on the work, not of fighting, not of profit-making but of interlinking bonds of human relationship.

Intently I hope that the time is at hand when we shall once again be proud to belong to a continent which produces the light that radiates through the storm-clouds of trouble and illuminates life's pilgrim path.

There was a time when Asia saved the world from barbarism. Then came the night, I do not know how. And when we were aroused from our stupor by the knocking at our gate, we were not prepared to receive Europe; for it came, not to give of its best, or to seek for our best; but heartlessly to exploit us for the sake of material gain. And Europe overcame Asia not through our admiration of her message of freedom and her service to humanity, but through her overpowering greed and the racial pride that humiliates. We did Europe injustice because we did not meet her on equal terms. The result was

the relationship of the superior and the inferior; and since then we have been imagining that we are destitute. We are suffering from want of self-confidence. We are not aware of our own treasures.

Let us free ourselves from the meshes of self-abasement, the most deadly of all impositions from the West, let us prove that we are not beggars.

This is your responsibility. Recover from your own homes things that are of undying worth. Then you will be saved and will be able to save all humanity.

Some of us, in the East, think that we should ever imitate the West. I do not believe in it. For imitation belongs to the dead mould. Life never imitates, it assimilates.

What the West has produced is for the West, being native to it. But we of the East cannot borrow the Western mind nor the Western temperament. We want to master the idiom which belongs to our own genius, the river bed which naturally carries our own thought-streams to the ocean of world culture.

You know that fairy tale—the eternal story of youth which is current in almost all parts of the world. It is about the beautiful princess taken captive by some cruel giant and the young prince who goes out to free her from the dungeon. Do you not remember when you heard it in your boyhood, how your blood was stirred, how you felt yourselves setting out in the guise of that prince to rescue her back to freedom. Today the human soul is lying captive in the dungeon of a Giant Machine, and I ask you, my young princes, to light up the fire of enthusiasm in your hearts and rush to rescue the human soul from the tyranny of the relentless greed which keeps it chained.

My young friends, I gaze across the distance of age at your young faces, beaming with intelligence and eager interests. I am approaching the shore of the sunset-land. You stand over there with the rising sun. My heart reaches out to your hearts and blesses them.

I envy you. When I was a boy, in the dusk of the waning night, we did not fully know to what a great age we had been born. The meaning of that age has become clear today. I believe there are individuals all over the world this moment who have heard its call.

What a delight it may be for you, and what a responsibility this belonging to a period which is one of the greatest in the whole history of Man, when all races have come close to each other. We realize the immense significance of this age only dimly, in the light of a glowing fire of pain, and do not yet know what form it is going to take.

It is your mission to prove that love for the earth, and for things of the earth, is possible, without materialism, love without the vulgarity of avarice.

I am tired and old. This is perhaps my last meeting with you. With all my heart I take this occasion to entreat you not to allow yourselves to be awed by the insolence of vulgar strength, of stupendous size, nor lured by the spirit of storage by the multiplication of millions, without meaning and without end.

October 1922

15 INTRODUCING ELMHIRST

As CHAIRMAN, it is my primary duty to introduce to you Professor Elmhirst, the lecturer of today's meeting. As my junior in years he has my affection. But deep in my heart I hold him in high regard. A time was when India saw a conflict between one race and another, one religion and another. During those medieval times of India's history saints like Ramananda broke through those barriers. They brought races and religions together and tried to bring about unity amongst Hindus and Muslims—so as to be able to deliver them out of the bounds of their narrowness. In Europe today we see the same spirit of conflict among nations. The countries there are torn by repeated wars. As a result, some of their men have started coming out into the wider world of humanity leaving behind the boundaries of nationhood and of caste and creed. By and by, we are bound to see a gradual expansion of such humanitarian work in the varied activities of men like Elmhirst. And, as we come to know him through his work we shall learn to give him the respect due to him of our own accord.

After obtaining his Tripos in History from Cambridge Mr Elmhirst had been to the United States to study Agriculture. I consider it necessary that I give you this background of his education. We do not wish nor expect that he should tell us something about the science of agriculture merely as an academic discipline. Nor is it the aim of today's lecture to deal with such eminently practical subjects as enriching the fertility of the soil or rotation of crops and so on. As a historian he must have studied the history of the human race in the wider perspective of man's relationship with the soil. We would like to hope that out of his study and reflection of this subject he will unfold to us his own ideas about the place that agriculture should occupy in the context of human life and civilization.

It has been my earnest desire for long that we in this country should deal with the problems of agriculture in a big way. I had sent some of our young men abroad to study agriculture so that on their return home they might tackle this problem and thus serve their motherland. During those days I had said in my article entitled *Swadeshi Samaj* that we have to reconstruct our national life with the village as the centre. To bring completeness of life to the village has been a dream of mine of long standing. That must be the reason why I shared this dream of mine with Mr Elmhirst when I met him for the first time in the States. I had told him then that if he could come out to India he would have no dearth of work to do and that he might be of help in bringing to the Indian village the kind of fulfilment that I had envisaged. He readily agreed to my proposal, and, young though he be, did not hesitate in the least to take up this work with a full sense of responsibility and dedication. The way he is going ahead with this work amongst the peasantry of a country strange to him—is a marvel to watch.

One of the highlights of our Indian tradition is the legend of King Janaka

who is reputed to have combined his quest for the highest truth (*Brahma*) with his knowledge of agriculture. For this wonderful synthesis that he achieved in the days of yore between the heavenly and the earthly, he is still considered to be the ideal monarch. It is in such context of the highest human ideal that we must regard the art of agriculture. If we fail to do so, this noble pursuit loses all its dignity. We cannot deny the hard truth that by looking upon agriculture as a daily repetition of drudgery our peasants humiliate themselves and wear the shibboleth of slavery of their own accord. By so doing they offer themselves for sale to the wealthy who live on the fruits of their toil. In Europe, they speak about the dignity of labour. But a peasant who is only a vassal or slave can claim no dignity. When a man exhausts all his wits plying the loom or driving a plough, he has no surplus left from cultivating his higher or nobler traits of humanity. He puts his hand to the job—but only as a machine or automation—and that is not conducive to his development as a complete human being. There can be no dignity in slaving for a wage. Manual work mechanically performed stultifies the mind and blunts the intellect. That is why a peasant drudging in a field excites only pity or contempt. Intellectuals have always looked down upon them because they find the churls have no vision, that their eyes cannot travel beyond the four corners of their fields. The intellectuals have felt that mere act of existence cannot make life worth-living.

But when a kingly sage like Janaka puts his hand to the plough, there can be no question of stultification or enslavement of the mind. When the time comes for our thinkers and intellectuals to take agricultural activities under their responsibility, the schism that at present exists between the hand and the brain for a large section of our population, will vanish. It is my earnest desire that having that aim in mind we do not grudge rendering help and co-operation to the lecturer in reaching that goal. Pray do not look upon him as a stranger from a distance simply because he is a foreigner. As he has dedicated himself to the service of mankind, he is one of us, and there can be no humiliation in accepting what he has to give. If one could see the work that he has initiated in our villages by joining hands with the local peasants, one cannot but entertain the highest regard for his enterprise. I therefore commend him and his lecture today to your best attention.

1922

16 FAREWELL TO DR M. WINTERNITZ

ACHARYA M. WINTERNITZ,

Before you came to us we had been aware of your reputation as one of the foremost scholars whose knowledge comprehended an amazingly vast field of Indian literature. We felt grateful to you for having accepted our invitation and were proud to be able to receive you as our honoured guest. On the day

when we must bid you farewell, let us assure you that our love for your personality has become equal to our reverence for your scholarship, and that though in outward appearance the time of your stay with us has been short, spiritually it has acquired a permanence in our heart.

Through the reticence of your modesty has sweetly shone the love of truth, and the love of man which is so completely free from race prejudice, from the narrow spirit of national egotism. Your intellectual outlook has found its moral background in the unity of man; and this has strengthened our love for the Visva-Bharati ideal. In fact, your personal contact with the inmates of this *Asrama* has been a living contribution to the building up of our Institution which for its materials must never depend upon bricks and mortar, rules and regulations, but upon its faith in human history as the history of the ceaseless endeavour to reach the highest expression of the spiritual meaning of existence.

It is needless to tell you that we started our Visva-Bharati with the expectation of attracting round it, from all parts of the world, individuals who, in the present turmoil of contradiction, still cherish hope in the ultimate triumph of the *Shantam* and *Shivam*, who in the light of the *Advaitam* will recognize themselves as brothers when they meet, though belonging to different climates and races. We have found you, dear friend, as one such, and our brothers' greetings we offer to you at this time of our parting.

1922

17 TO MY CEYLON AUDIENCE

IT STRUCK MY heart with dismay, when I visited Ceylon, to find that the people there have lost the consciousness of their unity with their Indian kinsmen. Not having in their mind a continental background for their culture and aspiration, they have permitted their intellectual and spiritual individuality to miss its shelter, and easily to drift into the vagabondage of imitation.

They seem to have forgotten that political division is merely a division of property through which we can change our residence, but not our brotherhood.

When the mouth of the branch of a great river is choked up, the branch becomes reduced to a stagnant pool; the pulsation of the ocean heart no longer reaches it, nor the living message that flows from the hoary height of the inaccessible. A community, cut off from its parent stem by disastrous oblivion, is sure to forget the great meaning of its own personality, and thus to fall a prey to the force of other personalities and be bent and clipped and hammered by them to their purposes. A tree grows in its own shape and finds its fulfilment, but when cut off from its root it is, as timber, at the mercy of the dealers who turn it into toys of their fancy.

Life is original; it is adventurous; it seeks itself in endless experiments, the

outcome of its spontaneous creative impulse. The people, who passively lend themselves to imitation, prove that life has lost its best claim on their hearts. It is the temptation of *Māra*, the evil spirit of Untruth, which whispers to us that we can be better than we are by seeming to be something else.

Thus we yield ourselves to being slowly robbed of the best gift given to us by God,—the dignity of our individual existence with its infinite possibilities of creation. We must never allow this to happen on either side of the water that divides this island of Ceylon from India.

Our subconscious self has the accumulation of ages of creative memory, wherein has grown in secret the racial genius which creates. The whole current of a people's history generates its own special energy of guidance in this region lying beneath the surface-consciousness of our mind. This is why, when we try to imitate some other people's history, we remain so pathetically unaware of the absurdities that are produced.

There can be no doubt that Ceylon's subconscious mind, its racial mind, has unbroken connection with that of India; the language which she speaks has all the subtle modulations, her physical organism all the characteristic gestures, that belong to it. When her conscious self tries to ignore this, and attaches itself to some alien mentality, then its progress, like that of a three-legged race in which legs belonging to different individuals are tied together, takes on a gait which is neither efficient, nor graceful.

All our efforts which are unmixed imitations are lame, for in them our conscious will ignores the co-operation of its great partner, our fundamental personality, which nevertheless goes on working in the subsoil of our consciousness. History, properly studied, saves us from these unrhythmic strivings which go contrary to the direction of our inmost nature; and Ceylon if she would do herself justice, must acknowledge that her intellectual and spiritual history runs in one stream with the cultural history of India.

The great religion of the Buddha had once spread its living spirit of Unity over the greater part of Asia. It drew race together and turned their hope and faith away from the turmoil of self-seeking.

True, the modern facilities of science have also established human communication across geographical barriers; but in this, man has only utilised physical forces to overcome physical obstructions. Buddhism was the first spiritual force, known to us in history, which drew close together such a large number of races separated by most difficult barriers of distance, by differences of language and custom, by various degrees and divergent types of civilization. It had its motive power, neither in international commerce, nor in empire-building, nor in scientific curiosity, nor in a migratory impulse to occupy fresh territory. It was a purely disinterested effort to help mankind forward to its final goal.

The religion, which flowed from the comprehensive mind of Buddha, has its negative aspect,—the control of passion and renunciation of self,—for purifying spiritual ideas and religious phraseology from all narrowness, anthropomorphic, or egotistic; it is the path of discipline through elimination.

But this cannot be the whole of it; and that this has not been all, is amply proved by the direction and form which Buddhism has naturally taken in the greater part of the Buddhistic world.

A seed has, as a portion of its body, the sheath which is hard, which is for its protection; but it also has its kernel which grows, which takes it out of its obscurity and spreads its branches wide. The special aspect of Buddhism, that has grown and spread its branching life far away from its mother soil, that has subdued the savage in the races which were primitive, and inspired in them art and literature, must have been its religious nucleus, carrying in itself the vital principle of Buddha's teaching. This life force, which is the positive element in Buddhism, has neither been lost in India herself; it is still working in the heart of even her lattermost religions in various shapes.

I have lately been reading a book about Buddhism, written by one who professes this religion. Our Buddhist author has tried to prove, that though Buddhism had its origin in geographical India, neither did its seed come from the Indian culture, nor did its root draw sap from the Indian mind. In other words, he would make out that it was an accident, which had no previous history, no natural genesis in a continued line of ancestors. In his zeal, the author is acrimoniously violent in the assertion that Buddhism as a religion is absolutely contrary to whatever preceded it in the religious history of India.

The child in the very process of birth manifests an apparent antagonism to the mother. All the same, the birth can never be a repudiation of the parent. There can be no question that Buddhism was one of the great products of the mother-heart of India.

We are free to admit that after centuries of its domination there was, outwardly a violent reaction against it. But when the history of that period is thoroughly investigated, I have no doubt that it will be found that what was forcibly thrown out was no part of the original idea of Buddhism, but a medley of miscellaneous aberrations, interpolated mostly from the dense tangle of non-Aryan superstitions.

That which I value most in my religion or my aspiration, I seek to find corroborated, in its fundamental unity, in other great religions, or in the hopes expressed in the history of other peoples. Each great movement of thought and endeavour in any part of the world may have something unique in its expression, but the truth underlying any of them never has the meretricious cheapness of utter novelty about it. The great Ganges must not hesitate to declare its essential similarity to the Nile of Egypt, or to the Yangtse-Kiang of China. Only a water spout displays a sudden arrogance of singularity and vanishes in the void, leaving mother Nature ashamed of so monstrous a production!

Whenever we find, in the immensity of the human mind the prototype of something which we hold most precious in ourselves, we should rejoice. The pride of special possession can cling only to those results of pot culture, which have merely market value. But great truths, like great monarchs of the forest, disdain to exhibit any extravagant speciality, which may offer temptation to those who are jealous of their proprietory right in rareness. The great is

never alone; it has its aristocracy of the sublime, its common kinship of the immortal.

This is why, because I consider Buddhism to be one of the greatest religious achievements of man, I find a delight in discovering some of its essential similarities, not only to the spiritual thought of ancient India, but to that of other great religions as well. Is it right that we should have pride merely in some special production of man, but not in Man himself? Only those, who have no respect for humanity as a whole, can believe that Truth, in its supreme aspect, has been reached only once by one chosen people, leaving no alternative to others but to borrow from it, or else to live in utter spiritual destitution.

I cannot accept from anybody the statement, that Buddhism was a freak of human nature, and that as a religion, utterly unlike any other religion in the world, it is not only unrelated, but contradictory to its spiritual surroundings; that it is the science and art of self-extinction referring to a world where there is no true principle of unity anywhere, within man, or outside him.

Once again I assert that no religion whatsoever can for a moment stand on the basis of negation. It must have some great truth in its heart which is positive and eternal, and for whose sake Man can offer all that he has, and be glad. And, in this, Buddhism must have its inherent relation and resemblance to that spiritual endeavour in ancient India which led men to leave aside their material possessions and seek the fulfilment of their life.

And what is this truth which the Buddha preached, which is eternal? It is *Dharma*, difficult to be rendered in English. Perhaps it may be translated as the 'highest ideal of perfection.' Certainly it is not a logical abstraction, nothing which is merely subjective. It is a reality which has to be reached, and according to the degree of our relationship with it, we attain the fulfilment of life. So this *Dharma* and the *Brahma* of our Upanishads are essentially the same, in regard to that which is supreme Reality.

The Buddhist *Dharma* does not consist in mere reason, blind and dark. It comprises within itself the highest spiritual enlightenment; it is eternally true for all beings; its laws are not restricted to any boundary of outward circumstances. Therefore it has the principle of reality, wisdom, and infinity. Likewise it has been said in the Upanishad: *Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Brahma,—Brahma is truth, wisdom, and eternity.* Then again, *Dharma* has not merely its reality, like the universal force of gravitation; it has its moral value, it leads us to peace, goodness and love. Similarly the *Brahma* of the Upanishad, who is *Satyam*, is also *Santam, Sivam, Advaitam*, which means that in *Brahma* is peace, goodness and union.

Dharma in Buddhism, or *Dharma Kāyā*, as it has been termed in some of the Buddhist scriptures, is an eternal reality of Peace, Goodness and Love, for which man can offer up the homage of his highest loyalty, his life itself. This *Dharma* can inspire man with almost superhuman power of renunciation, and through the abnegation of self, lead him to the supreme object of his existence, a state that cannot be compared to anything we know in this world;

and yet of which we can at least have a dim idea, when we know that it is only to be reached, not through the path of annihilation, but through immeasurable love. Thus, to dwell in the constant consciousness of unbounded love is named by Lord Buddha: *Brahma-Vihara,—moving in Brahma.*

However, let me not dwell too long on my own idea about the essential points of resemblance between the truths of Buddhism and the truths inculcated in the Upanishads. Those who want to indulge their sectarian pride by believing that they only are the fortunate people in the world, in possession of religion absolutely solitary in its singularity, I shall leave to their exultation. But I cannot allow the historical link of Buddhism with India's mind to be ignored, and I must assert that the truest relationship among human beings is that of ideals; a relationship more real indeed than even the kinship of blood.

What is this Visva-Bharati, this international institution—I was asked to explain. It may not be out of place to reproduce in our journal the explanation which I gave of the Visva-Bharati ideal to my Ceylon audience.

The word 'international' may sound too indefinite,—its meaning appearing large only because of its vagueness, like water acquiring volume by turning into vapour. I do not believe in an internationalism which is amorphous, whose features are broadened into flatness. The internationalism of Visva-Bharati must be the internationalism of India, with its own distinct character.

The true universal finds its manifestation in the individuality which is true. Beauty is universal, and a rose reveals it because, as a rose, it is individually beautiful. By making a decoction of a rose, jasmine and lotus, you do not get to a realization of some larger beauty which is interfloral. The true universalism is not the breaking down of the walls of one's own house, but the offering of hospitality to one's guests and neighbours.

Like the position of the earth in the course of its diurnal and annual motions, man's life, at any moment, must be the reconciliation of its two movements, one round the centre of its own personality, and another whose centre is in a luminous ideal comprehending the whole human world. The international endeavour of a people must carry the moment of the people's own personality round the great spirit of man. The inspiration must be its own, which is to help it in its aspiration towards fulfilment. Otherwise, mere cosmopolitanism but drifts on the waves, buffeted by wind from all quarters, in an imbecility of movement which has no progress.

One of the objects of Visva-Bharati is concerned with the personality of the people she represents,—to rescue this personality from the dimness of ignorance. As a people we must be fully conscious of what we are. It is a truism to say that the consciousness of the unity of a people implies a knowledge of its parts as well as of its whole. But, we not only have no such knowledge of India, we do not even have an eager desire to cultivate it.

By asserting our national unity with vehemence in our patriotic propaganda, we assure ourselves that we possess it, and thus continue to live in a

make-believe world of political day-dreams. The greater part of Bengal's knowledge of the Punjab consists in its relative position upon the maps of India,—a mere outline of information of a dead kind. How many Bengalis are there, who have studied the message of Nanak that has come to us through the Sikhs? And are there students in the Punjab, who have tried to understand the Vaishnavism of Chaitanya, and what place it occupies in the religious culture of India? India is the one place in the world, where the science of Ethnology can be studied with the full advantage; and yet it has never, aroused any enthusiasm in our students.

The fact is, we have a very feeble human interest in our own country. We love to talk about politics and economics; we are ready to soar into the thin air of academic abstractions, or to roam in the dusk of pedantic wildernesses; but we never care to cross our social boundaries and come to the door of our neighbouring communities, personally to inquire how they think and feel and express themselves, and how they fashion their lives.

The love of man has its own hunger for knowing. Even if we lack this concerning our fellow-beings in India, except in our political protestations, at least love of knowledge for its own sake could have brought us close to each other. But there also we have failed and have suffered. For weakness of knowledge is the foundation of weakness of power. Until India becomes fully distinct in our mind, we can never gain her in truth; and where truth is imperfect, love can never have its full sway. 'Know thyself,' for the giving of self is waiting for that knowledge. One of the endeavours of Visva-Bharati is to help us to *know* ourselves; and then along with it, her other mission will be fulfilled which is to inspire us to *give* ourselves.

What has given such enormous intellectual power to Europe is her concentration of mind. She has evolved a means by which all the countries of that continent can think together. Such a great concert of ideas, by its own pressure of movement, naturally wears away all her individual aberrations of thought and extravagances of unreason. It keeps her flights of fancy close to the limits of reticence. All her different thought-rays have been focussed in one common culture, which finds its complete expression in all the great European universities.

The mind of India, on the other hand, is divided and scattered; there is no one common pathway along which we can reach it. Up to the present, in all our patriotic endeavours, our effort has been to establish our unity on the basis of our common interest in the political or economic situation. It is like gathering coals for our railway journey, while the locomotive is nowhere to be found!

So I must guard myself against the least chance of my audience carrying away the belief that Visva-Bharati bases its ideal upon any ulterior expectation, political or otherwise. Its one object is to help each student to realize his personality, as an individual representing his people, in such a broad spirit, in such an unobstructed sunshine of spiritual expansion of consciousness, that

he may know how it is the most important fact of his life for him to have been born to the great world of man.

1922

18 LETTER TO LORD LYTTON

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I am being urged by my countrymen to assist them in giving expression to their sense of indignation at the remark made by your Excellency in referring to the complaint regarding police outrages on Indian woman.

There can be no room for doubt that the great majority of my countrymen who have come across your Excellency's reported words have been profoundly hurt by what they have taken them to mean—a meaning so far as I am aware which has upto now have not been authoritatively stated to have been wrongly attributed to those words.

At the same time knowing what I do of your excellency personally and of the traditions of chivalry which are your inheritance, I find if extremely difficult to believe that it could have been your Excellency's intention to cast aspersions on the fair names of the women of our country or even to hurt the feelings of my countrymen.

So I feel that I owe it to your Excellency, no less than to myself, frankly to write and ask what your Excellency's real meaning was, before saying anything further about the matter.

Trusting your Excellency will excuse any liberty which I may have unknowingly taken.

1924

19 BIRTH CONTROL MOVEMENT

DEAR MARGARET SANGER,

I am of opinion that the Birth Control movement is a great movement not only because it will save women from enforced and undesirable maternity, but because it will help the cause of peace of lessening the number of surplus population of a country, scrambling for food and space outside its own rightful limits. In a hunger-striken country like India it is a cruel crime thoughtlessly to bring more children to existence than could properly be taken care of, causing endless sufferings to them and imposing a degrading condition upon the whole family. It is evident that the utter helplessness of a growing poverty very rarely acts as a check controlling the burden of over-population. It proves

that in this case nature's urging gets the better of the severe warning that comes from the providence of civilized social life. Therefore, I believe, that to wait till the moral sense of man becomes a great deal more powerful than it is now and till then to allow countless generations of children to suffer privations and untimely death for no fault of their own is a great social injustice which should not be tolerated. I feel grateful for the cause you have made your own and for which you have suffered.

'I am eagerly waiting for the literature that has been sent to me according to your letter, and I have asked our Secretary to send you our Visva-Bhārati Journal in exchange for your Birth Control Review.'

1926

20 'KNIGHTHOOD'

BEING AWARE THAT a discussion has been raised in regard to my Knighthood, I feel it right to put clearly my own view of it before the public. It is obvious that it was solely to give utmost emphasis to the expression of my indignation at the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre and other deeds of inhumanity that followed it that I asked Lord Chelmford to take it back from me. If I had not fully realized the value of this title, it would have been impertinent on my part to offer it as a sacrifice when such was needed in order to give strength to my voice. I have not the overweening conceit discourteously to display an insincere attitude of contempt for a title of honour which was conferred on me in recognition of my literary work. I greatly abhor to make any public gesture which may have the least suggestion of a theatrical character. But in this particular case I was driven to it when I hopelessly failed to persuade our political leaders to launch an adequate protest against what was happening at that time in the Punjab.

A title of personal distinction for some merit that has a universal value is never a reward of favour. To show honour where it is truly due is the responsibility of the party who does it and any token of it should not be thrown away, unless for an exceptional occasion or purpose which is painfully imperative. I am not callously insensitive to the approbation which I have been fortunate enough to gain from outside my own country, and for the same reason, I also feel proud that men like Jagadish Chandra Bose and Prafulla Chandra Ray have won a title valuable like any other real recognition which our country may rightfully claim. The only complaint that can be made is that this title is fast losing its distinction through its heterogenous associations and that the above-named illustrious countrymen of ours are made to put up with too many strange bed-fellows in the career of glory. While concluding I confess to an idiosyncrasy, which has already beeen pointed out to the Editor of this journal, that I do not like any addition to my name,—Babu or Sriyut, Sir

Doctor, or Mr., and least of all, Esquire. A psycho-analyst may trace this to a sense of pride in the depth of my being and he may not be wrong.

February 1926

21 DESHBANDHU CHITTARANJAN DAS

MAN TRULY REVEALS himself through his gift, and the best gift that Chittaranjan has left for his countrymen is not any particular political or social programme, but the creative force of a great aspiration that has taken a deathless form in the sacrifice which his life represented.

1925

22 ROMAIN ROLLAND

WHILE IN AMERICA, I had occasion to talk about the rapid and enormous growth of organizations which attain their irresistible efficiency by eliminating the personal man and concentrating the mechanical one in a huge lump of system. I spoke of the spread of callousness and the deadening of the moral sense of responsibility in consequence of the machine representing man in most of his activities. Cruelty and injustice of an appalling kind have today been made easily possible, because they can be done through an organized elemental force which ruthlessly takes a direct path towards the fulfilment of its purpose, trampling down all other considerations. We have seen how the church can be blood-thirsty, while the religion it represents is humane; how it is possible to cheat on a wholesale scale in the name of business, while the respectability of the shares of profit remains untouched; how gross falsehoods are deliberately used for poisoning their victims by governments whose members have gentlemanly manners and traditions. When in loyalty to such gigantic institutions men commit terrible wrongs, they feel something like a religious exultation which smothers their conscience. It is the modern form of fetish worship with its numerous rituals of human sacrifice, in the shadow of which all other religions have faded into unreality.

One of my hearers who was in sympathy with my thoughts asked me how it could be possible to fight these organizations without setting up others in their place. My answer was that my reliance is on those individuals who have made human ideals living in their personality. They may look small and weak

by the side of the power they resist, as does a plant by the side of a huge, frowning boulder. But the plant has the magic power of life. It gradually creates its own soil with its own constant emanations, and its defeat and death are a prelude to a victorious resurrection. I believe that when anti-human forces spread their dominion, individuals with firm faith in humanity are born, who become acutely conscious of the menace to man and fearlessly fulfil their destiny through insult and isolation. We came to know such a man in England in the person of E.D. Morel who is dead now, but who can never die. When we see them, we know that the living spark of human spirit is not yet extinct and that there is hope. Human civilizations have their genesis in individuals, and they also have their protectors in them. One of the few proofs that the present day is not utterly barren of them is the life and work of Romain Rolland. And that the present day needs him most is proved by the scourging he has received from it, which is a true recognition of his greatness by his fellow-beings.

1925

23 FAREWELL ADDRESS TO CARLO FORMICHI

Dear Friend,

The happy time of our meeting in Santiniketan, in the atmosphere of rich leisure and peaceful cooperation, has at last come to its end, and your departure from our midst draws near. The very few weeks that you have been able to give us contain in them a full harvest of friendship that in the normal course of things would require the sunshine of a lifetime to mature. I know that our scholars here, with whom you worked, and who have come to appreciate heartily the value of the help you rendered and of the kindness you showed to them, will always remember you with grateful admiration. Your scholarship has most impressed us for its living and luminous quality of imagination; we have realized that your study of Indian culture does not merely reveal a scientific mind, but a personality full of sympathetic insight. Having the noble modesty of the truth-seeker, your unbiased mind could come into intimate touch with the ideal India, with all that is immortal in her of beauty and truth. Your discriminate appreciation has helped our students in directing their loyalty to the best that India has achieved in her intellectual and spiritual adventures—loyalty which is needed for the building up of a fruitful future on the promise of a fertile past.

In your own nature you have brought to us a gift which is not merely an outcome of a studious, scholarly training, but something native to the kindly soil of your mother country. It is that generosity of heart which has the magic power of bidding open the door of the inner sanctum of an alien race. I shall

always remember the happiness of those days which we shared together when profuse welcome was lavished upon us by the springtime in the eastern districts of our province, when all along our path we were repeatedly roused by the loud greetings of colour from the extravagant *kinshukas*, from the *ashoka* groves, blossoming with wistful reminiscences of a far-away lyric age in India. It made me feel proud of your companionship when I realized how easily your own accommodating kindliness found its way into the hospitality of our people, across the natural boundaries of unaccustomed habits and manners.

Your arrival in our *ashrama* was accompanied by the gift of an Italian library from your country, surprising in its magnificence. It has already aroused in our students a desire to honour it by owning it truly, thereby directly reaching that great source of inspiration which, in a period of new birth in European history, brought out such a variegated luxuriance of intellect and art on the western continent. This library has been a generous invitation to our people by your country to the feast of soul in that guest-house of hers which is open to all time and to all humanity.

You were a worthy bearer of this message from your own land; but being a true lover of India, you must also act as messenger on our behalf in carrying our assurance to Italy that this friendly beckoning of hers has given a permanent direction to our mind in its communication with herself. And all this is in accord with the ideal of Visva-bharati which, as you know, is to realize the freedom of pathway along the vast realm of man, widening our consciousness of the unity of spirit in the different human races. Your genial presence among us, the valuable service you have rendered to our *ashrama*, the precious token of sympathy you brought to us from your country and the masterly exposition you gave us of the gradual course of the spiritual illumination running through the period of Vedic India, has greatly strengthened our cause, creating a strong link with Italy in our bond of human solidarity.

In this connection I must mention the name of your former pupil Dr. Tucci, who is still with us and for the loan of whose services I cannot enough thank your government. He has studied with an amazing comprehensiveness, along with most of the other phenomena of ancient Indian culture, the greatest period of India's history; he has pursued the triumphant career of Buddhism in distant countries, following almost obliterated indications across the sand-buried antiquities, among the records of a startled history that has lost the memory of its own language. He can best remind the modern children of India of what has been the most glorious self-revelation in the annals of their ancestors. That was her ideal of universal sympathy—made uniquely real in the relationship which India at one time established with the neighbouring and distant countries through her self-conquering messengers, unarmed and unafraid, without greed and devoid of material means,—the ideal which urged one of her mightiest emperors in the hey day of his power to transfer the progress of his conquest and the expansion of his empire from the political to the moral plane.

It is our desire to proclaim this richest birth-right of ours as Indians, our

faith in this *dharma* which enjoins every man to realize, through the cultivation of *maitri*, the truth of his own self in the Truth which dwells in the All. You who come as a voice from across the seas giving harmony to the voice of the Eternal in the aspiration of India, you who allow us to realize in yourself the spiritual kinship of love and disinterested service,—you have helped us in this dark age of international suspicion and jealousy to light our lamp, which is dedicated to the divine spirit of *maitri*, acknowledged by Visva-bharati as the true ideal of India. And, therefore, our farewell today contains within it the deeper silent welcome of all days to our world of endeavour which will always carry in its heart the memorial of the best that your own life has offered to its creation.

Before we part, allow me to say that my relation with you is not merely through the cause I cherish in our institution. It is warmly personal and is intimately associated with my love for Italy and with the exuberant welcome which I received from her. If, owing to my increasing weakness and ill-health, I am prevented from claiming her hospitality ever again, her touch will always remain with me in the many relics of our meeting and the permanent representation you leave behind in the *ashrama* of the treasure of her thoughts and dreams, and of the large-heartedness of her people.

1925

24 PHILOSOPHY OF FASCISM

REFUSAL OF SUPPORT

My mind is passing through a conflict. I have my love and gratitude for the people of Italy. I deeply appreciate their feeling of admiration for me, which is so genuine and generous. On the other hand, the Italy revealed in Fascism alienates itself from the ideal picture of that great country which I should love to cherish in my heart.

You know I had my first introduction to Italy when I was invited to Milan last year. It takes a long time to study the mind of a people, but not long to feel their heart when that heart opens itself. I was in the city only for a very few days, and in that time I realized that the people loved me. Rightly or wrongly, one can claim praise as one's desert, but love is a surprise every time it comes. I was strongly moved by that surprise when I found loving friends and not merely kind hosts in the people of Italy. It grieved me deeply, and I felt almost ashamed when I suddenly fell ill and had to sail back home before I could fulfill my engagements in all the other towns.

Then followed the magnificent gift from Mussolini, an almost complete library of Italian literature, for my institution. It was a great surprise to me. In this greeting I felt the touch of a personality which could express itself in this direct manner in an appropriate action of unstinted magnificence. This

helped me to make up my mind to visit Italy once again, in spite of the misgivings created by the reports reaching us in India about the character of the Fascist movement. I had neither the qualifications nor any inclination to dabble in the internal political issues of the European countries. For this reason I wanted to keep my mind neutral when I came to Italy. But we live in a whirlwind of talk today, and an individual like myself is compelled to contribute to that universal noise, dragged by the chain of *Karma*, as we say in our country. I allowed myself to fall a victim to this relentness *Karma*, with its ever lengthening coil of consequence, when I succumbed to the importunity of the interviewers in Italy.

THE INTERVIEWS IN ITALY

The interview is a dangerous trap in which our unwary opinions are not only captured but mutilated. Words that come out of a moment's mood are meant to be forgotten; but when they are snapshotted, most often our thoughts are presented in a grotesque posture which is chance's irony. The camera in this case being also a living mind, the picture becomes a composite one in which two dissimilar features of mentality have made a *mesalliance* that is likely to be unhappy and undignified. My interviews in Italy were the products of three personalities—the reporter's, the interpreter's, and my own. Over and above that, there evidently was a hum in the atmosphere of another insistent and universal whisper which, without our knowing it, mingled in all our talks. Being ignorant of Italian I had no means of checking the result of this concoction. The only precaution which I could take was to repeat emphatically to all my listeners that I had as yet no opportunity to study the history and character of Fascism.

Since then I have had the opportunity of learning the contents of some of these interviews from the newspaper cuttings that my friends have gathered and translated for me. And I was not surprised to find in them what was, perhaps, inevitable. Through misunderstanding, wrong emphasis, natural defects in the medium of communication, and the pre-occupation of the national mind, some of these writings have been made to convey that I have given my deliberate opinion on Fascism, expressing my unqualified admiration.

This time it was not directly the people of Italy whose hospitality I enjoyed, but that of Mussolini himself as the head of the Government. This was, no doubt, an act of kindness, but somewhat unfortunate for me. For always and everywhere official vehicles, though comfortable, move only along a chalked path of programme too restricted to lead to any places of significance, or persons of daring individuality, providing the visitors with specially selected morsels of experience.

The only opinions I could gather in such an atmosphere of distraction were enthusiastically unanimous in praise of Mussolini for having rescued Italy in a most critical moment of her history, from the brink of ruin.

ABSURD TO IMAGINE THAT I COULD SUPPORT IT

In Rome I came to know a professor, a genuinely spiritual character, a seeker of peace who was strongly convinced not only of the necessity but of the philosophy of Fascism. About the necessity I am not competent to discuss, but about the philosophy I am doubtful. For it costs very little to fashion a suitable philosophy in order to mitigate the rudeness of facts that secretly hurt one's conscience. One statement which particularly surprised me, coming from the mouths of fervent patriots, was that the Italian people owing to their unreasoning impulsive nature, had proved their incapacity to govern themselves, and that, therefore, in the inevitable logic of things, they lent themselves to government from outside by strong hands.

However, these are facts that immediately and exclusively concern Italy herself, though their validity has sometimes been challenged by European critics. But whatever may be the case as to that, the methods and the principles of Fascism concern all humanity, and it is absurd to imagine that I could ever support a movement which ruthlessly suppresses freedom of expression, enforces observances that are against individual conscience, and walks through a bloodstained path of violence and stealthy crime. I have said over and over again that the aggressive spirit of Nationalism and Imperialism, religiously cultivated by most of the nations of the West, is a menace to the whole world. The demoralisation which it produces in European politics is sure to have disastrous effects, especially upon the peoples of the East who are helpless to resist the Western methods of exploitation. It would be most foolish, if it were not almost criminal, for me to express my admiration for a political ideal which openly declares its loyalty to brute force as the motive power of civilization. That barbarism is not altogether incompatible with material prosperity may be taken for granted, out the cost is terribly great; indeed it is fatal. The worship of unscrupulous force as the vehicle of nationalism keeps ignited the fire of international jealousy, and makes for universal incendiarism, for a fearful orgy of devastation. The mischief of the infection of this moral aberration is great because today the races of humanity have come close together, and any process of destruction act going does its work on an enormously vast scale. Knowing all this, could it be believed that I should have played my fiddle while an unholy fire was being fed with human sacrifice?

FASCISM AN AMERICAN INFECTION?

I was greatly amused when reading a Fascist organ to find a writer vehemently decrying the pantheistic philosophy of the passive and the meditative East, and contrasting it with the vigorous self-assertion and fury of efficiency which he acknowledges to have been borrowed by his people from their modern schoolmasters in America. This has suggested to my mind the possibility of the idea of Fascism being actually an infection from across the Atlantic.

The unconscious irony in the article I refer to lies in the fact of the writer's using with unction the name of Christianity in this context—a religion which

had its origin in the East. He evidently does not realize that if Christ had been born again in this world he would have been forcibly turned back from New York had he come there from abroad—if for no other reason, then certainly for the want of the necessary amount of dollars to be shown to the gatekeeper. Or if he had been born in that country, the Ku Klux Klan would have beaten him to death or lynched him. For did he not give utterance to that political blasphemy, "Blessed are the meek", thus insulting the Nordic right to rule the world, and to that economic heresy, "Blessed are the poor?" Would he not have been put in prison for twenty or more years for saying that it was as easy for the prosperous to reach the Kingdom of Heaven as for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle?

CHRISTIANITY AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

The Fascist professor deals a penthrust against what he calls our pantheism; but that is a word that has no synonym in our language, nor has the doctrine any place in our philosophy. He does not seem to have realized that the idea of Christian theology, that God remains essentially what he is while manifesting himself in the Son's being, belongs to the same principle as our principle of immanence. According to this doctrine the divinity of God accepts humanity for its purpose of self-revelation and thus bridges the infinite gulf between the two. This idea has glorified all human beings, and has had the effect in the Christian West of emancipating individuals from the thraldom of absolute power. It has trained that attitude of mind which is the origin of the best internal politics of the Western peoples. It has helped to distribute the power of government all over the country, and thus has given it a permanent foundation which cannot be tampered with or destroyed by the will of one individual or the whim of a group. This consciousness of the dignity of the individual has encouraged in the West the freedom of conscience and thought. We in the East come to Europe for this inspiration. We are also dreaming of the time when the individuals belonging to the people of India will have courage to think for themselves and express their thoughts, feel their strength, know their rights, and take charge of their own government.

AGGRANDISEMENT OF THE SLAVE STATE: A LESSON FROM INDIA

The Fascist writer I have quoted is evidently fascinated by the prospect of the economic self-aggrandisement of the nation at the cost of the moral self-respect of the people. But it is the killing of the goose for the sake of golden eggs. In the olden civilizations the slavery of the people did build up for the time being powers of stupendous splendour. But this spirit of slavishness constantly weakened the foundations till the towers came down into the dust, offering as their contribution to humanity ruins haunted by venerable ghosts.

In bygone days in India the State was only a part of the people. The mass of the population had its own self-government in the village community. Dynasties changed, but the people always possessed the power to manage all

that was vital to them. This saved them from sinking into barbarism, this has given our country a continuity through centuries of political vicissitudes.

Our Western rulers have destroyed this fundamental structure of our civilization, the civilization based upon the obligations of intimate human relationship. And therefore nothing today has been left for the people through which they can express their collective mind, their creative will, or realize the dignity of their soul, except the political instrument, the foreign model of which is always present before their envious gaze. We come to Europe for our lesson in the mastery of this instrument, as Japan has done and has been successful in her purpose. But must our friend the Fascist philosopher come to us to copy our political impotence, the result of the surrender of freedom for centuries to the authority of some exclusive reservoir of concentrated power, while rejecting our great ideal of spiritual freedom, which has its basis in the philosophy that infinite truth is everywhere, that it is for everyone to reach it by removing the obstruction of the self that obscures light!

IMPRESSION OF MUSSOLINI

I am sure you will be interested to know what was the impression that I have carried away from my interview with Mussolini. We met only twice, and our meetings were extremely brief, owing very likely to our difficulty of communication through the slow and interrupted medium of an interpreter.

In a hall of which the great size is accentuated by an unusual bareness of furniture, Mussolini has his seat in a distant corner. I believe this gives him the time and space to observe visitors who approach him, and makes him ready to deal with them. I was not sure of his identity while he was walking towards me to receive me, for he was not tall in proportion to his fame that towers high. But when he came near me I was startled by the massive strength of his head. The lower part of the face, the lips, the smile, revealed a singular contradiction to the upper part, and I have often wondered since then if there was not a secret hesitation in his nature, a timid doubt which was human. Such an admixture of vacillation in a masterful personality makes his power of determination all the more vigilant and strong because of the internecine fight in its own character. But this is a mere surmise.

For an artist it is a great chance to be able to meet a man of personality who walks solitary among those who are mere fragments of a crowd which is always on the move, pressed from behind. He is fully visible in his integrity above the lower horizon obstructed by the dense human undergrowth. Such men are the masters of history, and one cannot but feel anxious least they miss their eternity by using all their force in taking the present by the throat, leaving it dead for all time. Men have not altogether been rare who furiously created their world by trampling human materials into the shape of their megalomaniac dreams, to burden history at last with the bleached bones of their short-lived glory; while there were others, the serene souls, who with the light of truth and

magic of love have made deserts fruitful along endless stretches of grateful years.

SUSPENDED APPRAISEMENT

But to be honest, I must confess that I cannot fully trust my own impression, caught from a momentary glimpse of Mussolini in which mingled the emphasis of the surroundings in which I was placed. There have been times when history has played tricks with man and through a combination of accidents has magnified the features of essentially small persons into a parody of greatness. Such a distortion of truth often finds its chance not because these men have an extraordinary weakness of those whom they lead. This produces a mirage that falsifies the real and startles our imagination into a feeling of awe and exaggerated expectation.

To be tortured by tyranny is tolerable; but to be deluded into the worship of a wrong ideal is humiliating for the whole age which has blundered into submission to it. If Italy has made even a temporary gain through ruthless politics she may be excused for such an obsession; but for us, if we believe an idealism, there can be no such excuse. And therefore it would be wise for us to wait before we bring our homage to a person who has suddenly been forced upon our attention by a catastrophe, till through the process of time all the veils are removed that are woven round him by the vivid sensations of the moment.

My letter has run to a great length. But I hope you will bear with it, knowing that it has helped me in making my thoughts clear about my experience in Italy and also in explaining the situation in which I have been placed. This letter which I write to you I shall make use of in removing the mis-standing that has unfortunately been created in the minds of those who are in harmony with my ideals about the problems of the present age.

Vienna, 20 July 1926

25 FASCISM DENOUNCED

SIR, PROFESSOR FORMICHI is one of my best friends in Europe, and I do not wish to enter into a controversy with him about a subject that has already given him pain. It is enough that there has been a misunderstanding for which I myself must acknowledge my own share of the blame.

The literature that had reached me before I started for Italy was full of condemnation against Fascism and its leaders. And this was why it amazed me when the magnificent gift of an Italian library came to our Institution directly from Mussolini, proving in a most appropriate manner his appreciation of our

own cause. This generous expression of sympathy was followed by his lending to Santiniketan the service of Dr. Tucci, for whose scholarship I have an unbounded admiration. When, owing to this fact, my mind was hesitating between the two contrary inclinations, every evidence in favour of the present Government of Italy brought great relief to me. Such evidences appeared to me at that time as numerous, and what gave a special weight to them was the favourable testimony of some English residents in Italy, whom I chanced to meet. All this helped to make me feel at ease when I enjoyed the hospitality of the Italian Government, also to cherish the expectation that a channel of communication would be opened through Italy that would bring India closer into touch with Europe. There was every chance of such an expectation being fulfilled because of the fact that in the present-day Italy a human personality could make its mind work directly, and not through the wilderness of pulleys and wheels of a complex machinery of administration.

It may be because of the great attraction that we have in the East not so much for an efficient organization as for some living genius in all departments of society that I was naturally drawn to the vision of a creative mind, working in the person of Mussolini, moulding the destiny of Italy, infusing life into her from his own abundant life when she showed any sign of feebleness. That such was the case had often been declared to me by all types of men, commencing with the captain of the steamer that brought me to Europe and ending with a professor who believed in a spiritual significance of civilization. For some time I felt almost elated with the idea that an object-lesson was being offered by Italy to show that an ample room could be made for human personality in the heart of a political machine, modulating its rhythm in sympathy with the movement of a great living mind.

But this does not at all mean that I had any sympathy for the methods of Fascism, the nature of which I gradually came to learn at a later date. Even during my stay in Italy I was shocked and surprised when an Englishman in Rome, in his talk to me, tried to defend the Italian Government for forcing the teaching of Roman Catholicism through its educational institutions, saying that the State as an organism has the natural right, for the sake of its welfare, to choose its own particular religion and never to allow individuals in exercise their own choice. We personally know from the modern instances in India what a blind power of darkness religious sectarianism does represent, often giving rise to a fury of blasphemous inhumanity. European history also reveals the terrible danger of an epicurcanism of destructive passion when religion makes its alliance with physical force and material power. The talk with the Englishman suddenly made me aware for the first time in my tour, of the stifled voice and tortured conscience in Italy of the dominance of ruthless coercion that stood darkly hidden behind the screen on which was thrown the shadow picture of prosperity and peace. It struck me all the more strongly because I knew that there was a time when Mussolini had openly expressed his hatred of all religions in an extravagant language of abhorrence. For the first time it made me suspect that possibly there was something unnatural in the

high-pitched protestation of happiness by the people whom I met, that it rang loudly upon the dread hush of a universal fear.

I need not go into detail about the communications that were poured upon me by the victims of Fascism when I came out of Italy. I felt bound to assure my friends that the rumour which spread the impression that I supported Fascism as an ideal was unjust to me, that I still decried the despotic intimidation of spirit that humiliates the inner man in order to decorate him with a costly semblance of an outer glory.

At the same time I must confess that the more one studies the conditions of the different European Governments the more one is convinced that political freedom of the people, however desirable as an idea cannot be attained merely through the help of an organization. Like the spiritual freedom in an individual, it can only be won by a nation through self-discipline, through a self-respecting trustworthiness that naturally produces mutual trust, through voluntary submission to law and order. Where mastery of self is feeble the tyranny from outside compulsion is inevitable. It has become evident to us all that the best instrument of the freedom for the people has been created and mastered by the British nation only because it is one with its own character.

September 1926

26 PROTEST AGAINST THE POLICY OF REPRESSION

According to the teaching of our modern law-givers we refuse to believe that our countrymen who are being punished without trial are guilty of any crime. Taking shortcuts in law is like setting the whole house on fire in order to roast one's pig,—it is the primitive form of despotism. That we are amazed at such instances happening to us, is the best compliment that can be paid to the British administration in India. For we know that even in the West there are governments which in their attempt to enforce loyalty have no scruple in blindly applying the hasty method of punishment that has no restriction of law. The mind of the rulers whose misfortune is to govern a people that are physically helpless, is daily being sucked into the depths of demoralisation. For want of adequate resistance they are too often tempted to simplify the problem of administration by breaking through the barriers of their own law, thus not only doing injustice to their subjects, but much more so to themselves. As they have partially paralysed their own courts of justice, which represent their conscience, we have no other recourse but to appeal to the higher nature of the British people, and to remind them that civilization takes infinite trouble to prove itself, to keep the lamp of its best ideals from being

extinguished,—and that is why it is more afraid of the innocent being punished than of the chance of escape of the guilty.

We cannot claim the sympathy of kinship from our ruling race, while on the other hand, we only make our impotence ludicrous when we insinuate retaliation—our only claim is the claim of humanity which if refused comes secretly to hurt those who ignore it.

February 1927

27 HENRY BARBUSSE'S APPEAL: TAGORE'S RESPONSE

TO THE FREE SPIRITS

SINCE EIGHT YEARS that the war is over, the state of war is going on. In almost every country the essential liberties are threatened by violence. First one could believe that these were the last waves of a storm which would gradually subside, the consequence, fatal but transitory, of the pressure formerly exercised on martyrized peoples who reconquer their rights. But the mean interests of some groups or individuals have incorporated these blind forces; they have made of violence a system of government. Under the name of Fascism we see everywhere crushed or threatened all the conquests of freedom, that had been achieved by centuries of sacrifices and strenuous efforts: freedom of association, freedom of press, freedom of opinion, and even Conscience itself, all are persecuted. We can no longer remain silent in the presence of this bankruptcy of progress.

We think that the time has come to ask all the persons who exercise in our times any intellectual and moral influence in the world, to unite in a committee destined to struggle against the barbarous tide of Fascism.

In every country, under more or less open forms, but more and more audaciously and criminally, everywhere in forms more and more organized every day, a white terror is let loose on the populations, and the most sacred principles of individual and collective freedom.

Against this state of things which multiplies the acts of violence, the most inexcusable and indeniable crimes, and threatens to bring about hideous occurrences, the public opposition of men who are universally admired and respected will build an effective barrier. The mere fact of such an international committee being constituted would have a capital repercussion over opinion, would enlighten it, attract its attention, and incite the masses to manifest their will in the sense of their interests and destinies. This initiative would also constitute an act of salutary pressure over the governments who manifest for Fascism an inadmissible helpfulness and complicity.

That is not all. Every day from Italy, Spain, Poland, from the Balkans,

from everwhere, the echoes of numberless crimes and coups, reach us. Measures of reprisals deprive of their sustenance crowds of brave and loyal citizens. A shocking misery resigns in certain circles because of the dictature of the Fascist reaction. One of the first tasks of the committee will be to hold out their hand to these victims, to these martyrs, and to study the problem of their relief.

Once the Committee is constituted, outside every political party, uniquely on the plane of justice, reason and democratic progress which are in peril, this Committee will decide through what means its high and righteous mission can be realized.

It is therefore an adhesion of principles that we request from each of those to whom we address this appeal.

HENRY BARBUSSE

THE APPEAL REFERRED TO IN THE LETTER

Dear and Eminent Colleague, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore,
Santiniketan, Bolpur

Allow me to join a personal appeal to the one included herewith and to which I am requesting you to adhere. Your name is one of those which impose themselves in a league of great honest people who would stand up to oppose and fight the invading barbarity of Fascism.

I have worded this appeal spontaneously, without listening to any suggestion of a political order, or anything like it: I have only followed the feeling of solidarity and the voice of common sense. The evil is not without remedy. Something can be done, and what can be done before all with regard to the frightful proportions Fascism has taken, is to raise a moral protest, to mobilize the real public consciousness, and to give an explicit voice to the reprobation which is to be heard everywhere.

I must add that concerning the tenor of this appeal, I have exchanged views with Romain Rolland who is heartily with me, and who also thinks that a levy of free spirits, a protest of enlightened and respected persons is the only thing likely, if it is organized and continuous, to put a stop to an abominable state of things.

Finally I inform you that I intend to create very soon an international review: *Monde* (World), whose mission it will be to diffuse the great human principles among the present international chaos, to struggle against the reactionary spirit and propaganda. This publication can become an important tribune in the intellectual, artistic, moral, and social planes, if personalities like yourself want it. It will be a vehicle for the voice of the Committee and will embody its high protest.

I would be thankful to you for telling me whether you accept to be considered as an occasional contributor to *Monde*.

I would also be obliged to you for answering me, with regard to the

appeal, in a letter which I could utilise in case of need by publishing it partly or in extracts.

With my feelings of high and devoted consideration

HENRY BARBUSSE

TAGORE'S REPLY

DEAR FRIEND,

It is needless to say that your appeal has my sympathy, and I feel certain that it represents the voices of numerous other who are dismayed at the sudden outbursts of violence from the depth of civilization.

It is natural to expect in primitive peoples their faith in ceremonies of power-worship dripping with human blood; their awe-struck veneration for the relentless physical force that, at first, coerces and then fascinates its victims into the abject obedience of slavery. Such a mental attitude only indicates an immaturity of moral consciousness which, like the thoughtless cruelty of adolescence, can claim a future of growth for its rectification.

But when a similar phenomenon makes its appearance among cultured peoples it proves the second infancy of senility that has lost its control over animal passions. Its greed is not of impulsive youth, but of a hardened old age efficiently unscrupulous. Its infection is noxious because while it exhales from its core an unwholesome odour of decay and death, its outer skin swells and glows with an exultant flush of rottenness.

Therefore I rejoice at the fact that there are individuals who still believe in a higher destiny of man, proving in their suffering the deathless life of the human soul ever ready to fight its own aberrations.

You ask me for occasional contributions to your proposed international review *Monde*, which I shall remember when I have a little leisure, which is growing scarcer as I grow older.

Cordially Yours
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

July 1927

28 FREEDOM

DEAR DR. SUNDERLAND,

I had the pleasure of your personal acquaintance when I visited America and, along with many others of our countrymen, I know you, as a true friend of India. I am sure that there are very few who are as worthy as yourself to stand up for her rights and vindicate her honour.

Perhaps you are aware that I have not taken any active part in the political movement lately started in India with the object of gaining *Swaraj*. It is

needless to say that I also dream of freedom for my motherland, but I know that neither the path towards it nor its instrument and expression can be copied from the history of other nations. So long as the bulk of our people remains steeped in ignorance, unable to know its own mind, it can never attain emancipation for the purpose of its self-revealment in politics according to its own temperament and need.

I have been in the West and one thing that has strongly impressed my mind is the fact that there are nations who are technically free, and yet, like a bird that has hurt its wings, have not gained true freedom, remaining incapable of building up and using a perfect medium of political self-expression. There is every sign of their lapsing into slavery, voluntarily surrendering their freedom of self-government into the hands of the few who have the power to subjugate their minds into a dumb and blind obedience.

Freedom, like all the other best things in life, cannot be given from outside, but has to be won through the awakened personality of the people truly claiming it with intelligence, feeling and active will. We know it from our own national experience that the mere geographical fact of a country can never attract from its people a true feeling of loyalty and love, that our country must be our own creation, that its health, wealth and wisdom must represent the combined self-discipline of an intelligent and continual public service.

I know that the government by foreigners who must, by every means cling to their possession of our land because of its vital necessity for themselves, can never allow us our full opportunity for serving our country and moulding her destiny according to her own best interest. All the same, it has to be admitted, that the people who cannot intimately identify their own selves with their motherland through comprehensive knowledge, love and labour, the constant co-operation of their intellect and will, have not the real possession of their country, and therefore for them foreign subjection is the inevitable outcome of their lack of such moral grip upon their environment.

It is a truism to say that freedom cannot be built upon a foundation of unreality. Our want of ordinary human interest not only in our neighbouring provinces, but in communities not our own, is darkly dense among us; the communication of mutual sympathy and understanding between ourselves is barred at every step by caste and communal obstructions and religious fanaticism. The unreasoning acceptance of practices and prohibitions in minute details of life, the complete sacrifice of individual initiative forced upon our unthinking millions by a system of social tyranny more perfectly organized than in any other country of the world, the terribly efficient machinery for a wholesale manufacture of cowards and slaves constantly working in our domestic surroundings, these are the powerful enemies that are in alliance with the evil star of our political misfortune. Our immediate duty is to fight them, to conquer our country from the age-long domination of an intellectual and moral inertia, from the crude materialism ruling in the guise of piety causing immense dissipation of energy and unmeaning suffering and degradation.

In countries where the mind is alive and active, the different problems such as politics and economics have their meaning. But where the mind itself is smothered under a load of dead things, under the pressure of automatic habits inherited from a primitive past, all our powers must be directed towards rescuing it from the debris of a ruined antiquity. That means widespread education. Of course, we in the name of humanity, have the right to appeal to our rulers to help us in this object. And yet that appeal may be in vain, or ludicrously meagre in its response, owing to a parsimonious budget bursting with its burden of military and punitive expenditure. But there is nothing, except our own apathy, to prevent ourselves, from utilising all our resources and organizing a system of national education that will include in its functions an active and direct guidance of the life of the people, helping them to realize the dignity and freedom of their creative spirit. Only when they are conscious of the real meaning of self-rule within themselves, can they successfully strive to establish it over their outer circumstances.

February 1927

29 MOTHER INDIA

I

SIR

While travelling in this land of Bali, I have just chanced upon a copy of the New Statesman of the 16th of July, containing the review of a book on India written by a tourist from America. The reviewer, while supporting with an unctuous virulence all the calumnies heaped upon our people by the authoress, and while calling repeated attention to the alleged common Hindu vice of untruthfulness even amongst the greatest of us, has made public a *malicious piece of fabrication* not as one of the specimens picked up from a show-case of wholesale abuse displayed in this or some other book, but as a gratuitous information about the truth of which the writer tacitly insinuates his own personal testimony. It runs thus: 'The poet Sir Rabindranath Tagore expresses in print his conviction that marriage should be consummated before puberty in order to avert the vagaries of female sexual desire.'...

'We have become painfully familiar with deliberate circulation of hideous lies in the West against enemy countries, but a similar propaganda against individuals, whose countrymen have obviously offended the writer by their political aspiration, has come to me as a surprise. . . .

II

SIR,

I came to know from the advertising columns of your paper that Miss Katherine Mayo's 'Mother India' has been lauded by Arnold Benett as 'a

hocking book, in the honourable sense.' Unfortunately, for obvious reasons, ıere is a widely prevalent wish among the race that rules India to believe any etraction that may bring discredit upon India, and consequently the kind of ıocks that Miss Mayo has manufactured offers them a delicious luxury of ıdignation. The numerous lies mixed with facts that have been dexterously ıanipulated by her for the production of these shocks are daily being exposed ı our journals; but these will never reach the circle of readers which it is easy ır Miss Mayo to delude. Along with other eastern victims of lying propaganda, e in India also must defencelessly suffer mudbesmearing from unscrupulous terature: for your writers have their machinery of publicity which is cruelly fficient for raining slanders form a region usually unapproachable by us, ıattering our fair name in an appallingly wholesale manner.

I happen to be one of those whom the writer has specially honoured with er attention and selected as a target for her midnight raid. Difficult though is for me completely to defend myself from such a widespread range of ıischief, I must try through your organ to reach the ears of at least some of ıy friends, who are on the other side of the Atlantic and have, I hope, the ıivalry to suspend their judgment about the veracity of these shocking atements made by a casual tourist against a whole people, before lightly elieving them to be honourable.

For my own defence, I shall use the following extract from a paper written / Mr. Natarajan, one of the most fearless critics of our social evils. He has cidentally dealt with the inciminating allegation against me deliberately ıncocted by the writer out of a few sentences from my contribution to eyserling's 'Book of Marriage'—cleverly burgling away their true meaning ıd shaping them into an utterly false testimony for her own nefarious ırpose. Mr. Natarajan writes as follows:—

'Tagore sets forth his own ideal of marriage in five long pages at the end his paper (Keyserling, pp. 117 *et seq.*) 'Let me,' he begins, as an individual dian, offer in conclusion my own personal contribution to the discussion of e marriage question generally.' He holds that the marriage system all over e world—and not only in India—from the earliest ages till now, is a barrier the way of the true union of man and woman, which is possible only when ɔciety shall be able to offer a large field for the creative work of women's ecial faculty, without detracting from the creative work in the home.'

'If Miss Katherine Mayo was not a purblind propagandist but an honest quirer, and if she had the patience to read Tagore's essay, she might have ked any one in Calcutta what the age of marriage of girls is in Tagore's own nily. That she was determined to discredit the poet is evident.'

Let me ask some of your readers to read my paper on Hindu marriage in yserling's book and challenge in fairness to me, Miss Mayo to prove that it s my own opinion as she asserts that child marriage is "a flower of the ɔlimated spirit a conquest over sexuality and materialism won by exalted ellect for the eugenic uplift of the race," implying "the conviction, simply, ıt Indian women must be securely bound and delivered before their

womanhood is upon them if they are to be kept in hand."

Let me in conclusion draw the attention of your readers to another amazing piece of false statement in which she introduces me, with a sneer as a defender of the "Ayurvedic" system of medicine against Western medical science. Let her prove this libel if she can.

There are like myself other numerous witnesses who, if they find their access to the Western readers, will be able to place their complaints before them, informing them how their views have been misinterpreted their words mutilated and facts tortured into a deformity which is worse than untruth.

November 1927

30 COLOUR PREJUDICE

I HAVE READ the letter of Mr. Habib Motan dated November 19, 1927, addressed to the Agent-General, protesting against any Indian being invited to attend Fort Hare Natevi College, for University education. In this published letter, he states that 'it is humiliating to the Indian sentiment, and to the Indian National Honour and Civilization to think that our Agent-General is trying to bring us down to such a low level. Such colour prejudice, from an Indian, who has himself suffered from the racial prejudice of the European, is to me revoking in the extreme. It is neither in accord with Indian sentiment or with Indian National Honour and Civilization. Our only right to be in South Africa at all is that the native Africans, to whom the soil belongs, wish us to be there. To insult them publicly as Mr. Habib Motan has done, in their open letter,—both by the words I have quoted, and by others are equally contemptuous—is an act which needs immediate repudiation from all right-minded men.

April 1928

31 TO THE WORLD LEAGUE FOR PEACE

IN OUR POLITICAL ritualism, we still worship the tribal god of our own make and try to appease it with human blood. This fetishism is blindly primitive and angers truth that leads to death dealing conflicts. To many of us it seems that this blood-stained idolatory is a permanent part of human nature. But we know in our past history, there have been things born of dark unreason producing phantoms of fear in our mind and ferocity of suspicion. Within the boundaries of night they also had loomed large and appeared as everlasting.

But a great many of them have already vanished, making the social life of a fruitful peace possible in civilized communities.

Let us, today, by the strength of our own faith prove that the homicidal orgies of a cannibalistic politics are doomed, in spite of contradictions that seem overwhelmingly formidable.

1928

32 AT THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE

I WAS ASKED by the US Immigration Authorities at Vancouver to go to their office in person with my papers. My secretary had asked the Immigration Officer to fix an hour for the examination and at the appointed hour, I went to the office. After I had waited for about half-an-hour, the officer came to the door, saw me and without taking any notice of me, went on talking to some one who had then come. After finishing that, he silently beckoned to me to come into the room and then curtly pointed to a chair with a nod of his head. I was then asked the usual questions about my ability to pay my passage, whether I had independent means of livelihood as long as I remained in the States, and I was warned of the penalty that I shall incur if I overstayed in the States the period of time allowed to me by the officer.

I had visited the States before but I never had such experience. I thought of cancelling my proposed visit to the States; but I had already reserved my accommodation in the train and said good-bye to my friends. I arrived at Los Angels, and I felt something in the air—a cultivated air of suspicion and general incivility towards Asiatics. I was assured that the Immigration Regulations were made in the application particularly humiliating to all Asiatics. I felt that I should not stay in a country on sufferance. It was not a question of personal grievance or of ill-treatment from some particular officer. I felt the insult was directed towards all Asiatics, and I made up my mind to leave a country where there was no welcome for ourselves.

. . . I have great regard for your people. But I have also my responsibility towards those whom you classify as coloured people of whom I am one. I am a representative of Asiatic peoples and I could not remain in a country where Asiatics were not wanted.

. . . I am very glad that the officer did not treat me differently because I might have some reputation but treated me as an Oriental and as a coloured man. The ordinary civility between gentleman and gentleman was lacking in his treatment but this was entirely due to the fact that he had been dealing with Asiatics and the Immigration Regulations had given his attitude of mind.

11 May 1929

33 'EAST IS EAST'

DEAR MADAM,

Each people has its physical environment given to it, and social surroundings created by itself. Its history is its continual adjustment to these, through modifications of its inner and outer world. If in the midst of this, some alien element is thrust upon a particular people—some human power which has its own distinct evolution, its separate need, its special object which is not only not coincident with that of the other, but very often hurtfully antagonistic,—a confusion results, and this people, in its perplexity, can never show itself to its best advantage.

Europe today is the dominant factor in the human world, but unfortunately she has come to the Far East, not with an ideal, but with an object that primarily concerns her own self-interest. This naturally makes the Eastern peoples suspicious and nervously eager in their turn to exploit the circumstances for their own profit; but, not having the power in their hands, and being therefore unequally matched, they cannot afford to be frank in their manner and method. They have become accustomed to being misunderstood, which helps them to develop, for the sake of self-respect and self-protection, the habit of hiding their thoughts. This is what makes it difficult for the Western individuals who have a natural gift of sympathy and the desire to deal with their fellow-beings in the East in a spirit of justice and love.

You will surely understand why, generally, a Chinese may feel constrained to shut his heart, and even reveal the worst side of his nature, to the European,—member of a race that, for the sake of profit, felt no compunction in drugging the whole great people of China, and humiliating them because they showed resistance. If the Europeans had come to China to offer to her the best that their own civilization had produced, China also, in her relationship to them, would have had the opportunity to do herself justice, and show to them her best side.

Allow me to assure you that your letter has given me genuine pleasure for which I thank you.

1929

34 PROTEST AGAINST THE ARREST OF MAHATMA GANDHI

MAHATMAJI HAS been arrested without having been given a chance of coming to mutual understanding with the Government. It only shows that of the two partners in the building of the history of the people of India can be superciliously ignored according to our rulers. However, the fact has to be accepted

as a fact, and we must prove to the world that we are important, more important than the other factor which is merely an accident. But if we lose head and give vent to a sudden fit of political insanity, blindly suicidal, a great opportunity will be missed. The despair itself should give us the profound calmness of strength, the grim determination which silently works its own fulfilment without wasting its resources in puerile emotionalism and self thwarting destructiveness. This is the moment when it should be easy for us to forget all our accumulated prejudices against our kindreds, when we must do our best to combine our hands in brotherly love even with those who have roughly rejected our call of comradeship, when we must claim of us an intense urge of co-operation with all different parts of our nation. This is the kind of catastrophe which rarely comes to a people with a shock that brings to a focus our scattered forces and shortens the difficulties ol our creative endeavour in the building of our freedom.

The primitive lawlessness of the law-makers should forcibly awaken us to our own ultimate salvation in above which owns no defeat in the face of a power which barricades itself with an indiscriminate suspicion that its blind panic cannot define. This is the time when we must never forget our responsibility to prove ourselves morally superior to those who are physically powerful in a measure that can defy its own humanity.

May 1930

35 INDIA: AN APPEAL TO IDEALISM

I FIND IT difficult to do my duty today in a spirit of patience and calmness, and at the same time to do justice to the Indian cause, to myself and my friends in this country. For the atmosphere of mutual relationship between India and Great Britain has grown dark with suspicion and suffering.

It is my desire in this article to write concerning a reconciliation between two peoples who for over a century have had a close connection with each other, and yet are still separated by a moral distance more difficult to overcome than mountains and seas. In this sensitive age of new awakening, the human in us in India has felt the indignity and pain of being dealt with by an abstraction of a government from across a dark chasm of impersonal aloofness, devoid of the light of imagination and the living touch of sympathy. This large gap in humanity has offered a breeding-place to a diseased political condition in our history that is crying for a cure. It can only be affected by a generous co-operation from both sides, by a union of minds which know how to make proper allowance for weakness in human nature, and at the same time maintain firm faith in it where it is great.

Our task is every day growing harder: for the situation, is solely left in the

hands of the politicians, who represent the organization and not the humanity of a people. And therefore any appeal today is to that idealism which has made English history glorious, and which must extend its glory in an alien country.

Once Asia in her spring time of exuberant life offered the world her spiritual ideals. Today Europe in the illumination of her intellect has brought her science and also her spirit of service. But unfortunately she has not come to Asia to reveal the generosity of her civilisation, but to seek an unlimited field for her pride and power, trying to make these things eternal. She has come with her need and not with her wealth; and therefore she has belied her own mission and used the truth itself for a utilitarian purpose of self-aggrandisement. In order to wake her up to her own responsibility Asia must refuse weakly to yield her contribution to the impious belief that dehumanised power can succeed for ever with the help of science.

The people of England appear doomed to remain ignorant of the true state of things that prevails today in India. For in critical times like those Governments which have their faith in the short cut of punitive force for the speedy solution of their problems become more afraid of the higher spirit of their own people than their enemies themselves. And therefore they create in the surrounding air the smoke screens of obscurity and calumny in order to hide their own method of action and discredit that of their opponents. This has been amply proved in the late war. The organized power has the organ of a magnified voice; but we who have no proper means of publicity nor the bond of kinship with the British people to make it easy for us to gain credence, must resignedly accept all misrepresentation as the bitterest part of our national penance, the unavoidable penance for our own long history of weakness. Yet I cannot allow this occasion to pass by without declaring that with few exceptions, inevitable in the present atmosphere of panic and defiance, India in this trial has maintained her dignity of soul. Even through distortion and suppression of truth, and circulation of untruth with belated contradiction in small letters, the fact glimmers out that our people, with a pious determination, has kept unshaken the difficult ideal which they have accepted from their great leader Mahatma Gandhi, who upholds the noblest spirit of India, the spirit of Buddha himself. To us who are away from our homes there has reached the voice of the sufferers across the barriers of silence and the sea, carrying above the smothered cry of pain, the exaltation of a fulfilled vow under extreme provocation. My prayer for my people is not for the cessation of their suffering, but for the keeping up of their trust in the power of the human spirit which shows itself in all its might of truth among those who are physically weak; for we have both the occasion and the responsibility to prove this not only on behalf of India, but of all humanity.

For the sake of justice I must declare that in such a conflict between an unarmed people and a government in possession of unlimited power of destruction, our sufferings would have been terribly greater under any imperialistic rulers other than the British; and the fact that our country even in her desperate effort of utter defiance should still feel resentful at the acts

of injustice due to methods of coercion hastily improvised, is an evidence of her strong faith in the standards of justice and humanity possessed by the British nation. It also shows our lack of direct experience of any great political revolution. In fact, if the lesson of history must be acknowledged, our people should never murmur against violence on the part of their rulers when normal conditions of government have been upset. We must expect this and face it, and never complain and blame the government for the drastic measures which we have deliberately made inevitable, while fully, I hope, anticipating the consequence. To light the fire and then complain that it burns in absurdly childish. And, therefore, we should, in all fairness, take upon ourselves the ultimate responsibility of the flogging and shooting, of injuries and indignities, of indiscriminate methods of striking terror into the hearts of a helpless multitude and of the awful fact that the majority of victims must necessarily be innocent in a catastrophic outrage of this nature. None of us can cowardly claim immunity or mitigation of suffering, when, even if rashly, the subversive forces of history have brought down upon our country in the hope of building her history upon a new foundation.

The only thing which is most important for us to remember is that we should heroically uphold our own *Dharma* and refuse to accept defeat by offering violence in return.

June 1930

36 RACE AND COLOUR PREJUDICE

I REGARD THE race and colour prejudice which barricades human beings against each other as the greatest evil of modern times, which should be overcome if humanity must be realized as one spirit.

The different paths along which progress may be made towards recovery from this evil are manifold. My own stress would be laid upon elevation of the public mind and the collection and dissemination of accurate scientific knowledge as against the pseudo-science and pseudo-religion which, in this disguise of truth are trecherously dealing mortal blows to truth herself.

There should be a united effort to combine the emotional forces of religion, in its broadcast sense, with the spread of education based on fully ascertained truth concerning the human race as a whole.

1930

37 FAITH IN BRITISH JUSTICE

SIR,

A fact of very grave significance at present crisis in the British rule in India has sorely puzzled my mind. I am impelled to write about it, for I find that its

importance is not understood in England even by those who are in touch with Indian affairs.

At Dacca in Eastern Bengal, there have been communal riots in which men of vicious character have been brought in so as to increase the mischief, and unspeakable atrocities have occurred. Yet, according to reports which have reached me, the police have either stood idly by or allowed the evil to go on with indifference and contempt. While the news of a motor accident in Europe causing a few casualties is circulated in all your newspapers, these crying evils continuing from day to day in the capital city of East Bengal (whereby the whole neighbourhood was terrorized and all work paralysed) have hardly found any mention in English journals. The number of deaths, the loss of property, the daily sufferings and terrors caused by these events have been enormous; and yet they have been ignored with a strange ominous silence. If a single English man were injured, or the comforts of English residents were menaced such silence would hardly be kept. Is it any wonder, then, that we are led to regard ourselves as of no interest or importance in the eyes of the British people, who have taken upon themselves the gratuitous task of our trusteeship? Is it strange that we consider such silence as artificially imposed rather than naturally occurring?

We have not the least doubt that the most expensively and elaborately organised power which the British Government has in India is more than sufficient in checking at once any symptoms of violence in our communal relationship. We have been brought up for a long time past on this belief. What has now occurred at Dacca had happened in a somewhat similar manner a few years ago in Calcutta and had been loudly proclaimed in the English Press. What is remarkable in the present instance is that amid an almost complete silence in the British Press a state of anarchy continued in Dacca for a unconscionably long time. The opinion formed about this arresting silence by our own people is unlikely to be accepted by the people of England.

Here comes the real meaning of our helplessness. For the British people have their comfortable faith in the conduct of their own officials who rule over an alien people. They feel little direct responsibility. Therefore, when our evidence is pitted against that of their own official representatives, we have little chance of credence. Let us acknowledge that this is natural; yet at the same time we should be allowed for the same reason to have faith in our own people when under conditions like the present they suffer and complain. For we are very unequally matched; and while your opinion vitally affects us at every point our opinion may easily remain unnoticed or else be even suppressed by you. But silenced though our people may be and ineffectual in their struggle, we judge; and in the end it 'does' matter. I know from my own correspondence that this event at Dacca has alienated, more than anything else in Bengal the sympathies of those who were still clinging their faith in British justice. Other happenings had shaken public confidence, but this has struck at its very foundation.

1930

38 MESSAGE TO THE QUAKER SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

By segregating ethics to the Kingdom of Heaven and depriving the Kingdom of Earth from its use man has up to now never seriously acknowledged the need of higher ideals in politics or in practical affairs. That is why when disagreements occur between individuals, violence is not encouraged but punished; but when the combatants are nations, barbaric methods are not only not condemned but glorified. The greatest of men like Buddha or Christ have from the dawn of human history stood for the ideal of non-violence, they have dared to love their enemies and defied tyrannism by peace, but we have not claimed the responsibility they have offered us.

Fight is necessary in this world, combat we must and relentlessly against the evils that threaten us, for by tolerating untruth we admit their claim to exist. But war on the human plane must be what in India we call—*Dharma-Yuddha*—moral warfare, in it we must array our spiritual powers against the cowardly violence of evils. This is the great ideal which Mahatma Gandhi represents, challenging his people to fearlessly apply man's highest strength not only in our individual dealings but in the clash of nation and nation.

In the barbaric age man's hunger did not impose any limits on its range of food, which included even human flesh but with the evolution of society this has been banished from extreme possibility: in a like manner we await the time when nothing may supposedly justify the use of violence whatever consequences we are led to face. Because, success in a conflict may be terrible defeat from the human point of view, and material gain is not worth the price we pay at spiritual cost. Much rather should we lose all than barter out soul for an evil victory. We honour Mahatma Gandhi because he has brought this ideal into the sphere of politics and under his lead India is proving everyday how aggressive power pitifully fails when human nature in its wakeful majesty bears insult and pain without retaliating. India today inspired by her great leader opens the new chapter of human history which has just begun.

1930

39 'I AM PROUD OF MY PEOPLE'

In the Indian endeavour to pursue the ideals of the Mahatma in the fight for freedom, success may or may not be achieved. But I am proud of my people that they fight for higher ideals. India must be an example to the whole world.

'What kind of government India will have cannot be foreseen. Governments develop through centuries, and should India obtain self-government

this must be in accord with the character of the Indian people and with the peculiar circumstances. For the form of government suitable for India can develop only out of the atmosphere of Indian life.

It is certain that India will have her own constitution, for India's problems are as unique as her own mental constitution. India is India.

20 September 1930

40 STATEMENT CONTRADICTED

To The Editor, New York Times,

I cannot allow to remain uncontradicted some misstatements of my view about the present Indian problem in the report of the interview with me which has appeared in your paper of this morning issue. Let it definitely be known that according to me it is the opportunity for self-government itself which gives training for self-government, and not foreign subjection, and that an appearance of peace superficially maintained from outside can never lead to real peace, which can only be attained through an inevitable period of suffering and struggle.

October 1930

41 THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE

THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE for Peace and Freedom has done valuable work in bringing to bear upon the civilization of the West the ideals of spiritual life which demand social service and belief in non-violence to establish the future civilization of humanity. Women are naturally gifted with the power of peace and the modern age needs their active co-operation in its effort to unite the different peoples of the world on the basis of mutual understanding. I am glad to know that the W.I.L. has accepted its full share of responsibility in this great work.

I am sure our women of India will be happy to join hands with their sisters in the West in their service to humanity, and that the visit of the representative of WI.L. to India, which I hear is being arranged for will help to bring India and Europe closer together in lasting bonds of comradeship.

November 1930

42 THE COLOUR BAR

SIR

An Englishman finds his mental comfort disturbed when he has to deal with differences that are foreign to him, for he has inherited an intense consciousness of race individuality from an ancestry brought up in geographical segregation. A marked difference in colour which makes too conspicuous the difference in race produce in his conventional mind an aggressive sense of alienation. The same thing happens with regard to a different dress, as I have often noticed in my case even in a metropolis like London or in American towns, where, curiously enough, strangers are less tolerated in their strangeness than in England. In the continental countries of Europe I have never once aroused among those with whom I travelled, their sense of the comic by my costume, which I am sure, has not the slightest element of the ludicrous, specially when compared with their own. It is from the same cause that an Englishman feels not merely amused but positively irritated at the wrong pronunciation of his language by foreigners who cannot help being foreigners in the habits of their tongues.

It is a sign of national provincialism thus to associate natural differences in others with inherent inferiority and disagreeableness. Of all peoples in India, we in Bengal suffer from this imperfect adaptability of imagination which causes arrogance. It is owing to our provincialism, for we have been accustomed for centuries to live in a remote corner developing our race mannerism. The Bengali people are prone to keep themselves isolated when in unaccustomed surroundings, and they have an unenviable talent of making themselves unpopular with the people of other provinces of India.

Up to a certain point this tendency of aloofness has its advantage in emphasizing individuality which helps to conquer opportunities for itself, and Bengali people undoubtedly did utilize that advantage, capturing special privileges long before others were ready in the field. But when history has to be made great through perfect co-operation with neighbours, through a spirit of mutual concession and understanding, our ungenerous habit of jealous self-assertiveness offers obstacles, and we are likely to recede into the background.

The stubborn insularity of the Englishman has helped him in the beginning of his career of conquest. He naturally failed to identify himself even in a slight degree with the Indian people whom he ruled from a supercilious distance. This proud detachment has no doubt helped him in ruling a foreign race with a vigorous efficiency. But such an imperfect relationship in human affairs maintained by force cannot last long. At last the time inevitably comes when history has to be made great upon a positive basis of co-operation, and not merely upon the negative basis of law and order. It is not the race which can rule that has the historical fitness to survive, but the race which understands, which has the sympathetic imagination—in other

words, the moral power of adaptability. After all, in the long run it will come true that the meek shall inherit the earth. Colour prejudice shows the lack of the power of social adaptation. Our own history began with it, and though India desperately tried some kind of mechanical race adjustment, she has failed in giving birth to a living political organism owing to this abnormal caste consciousness that obstructs the stream of human sympathy and spirit of mutual co-operation. This is the reason why, in spite of the fact that India has produced a series of great minds, she has not produced a great organic history; and it has yet to be seen if such a history is in the making in which two peoples of different colours can have a perfect bond of life from across the sea.—I am, Sir, & c.

April 1931

43 TAKAGAKI

To Dr. B.C. Roy, M.D. F.R.C.S., Mayor of Calcutta Corporation, Calcutta
DEAR DR ROY,

Please accept my sincere congratulations on your election as the Mayor of Calcutta Corporation.

I wrote sometime ago to Srijukta Subhas Chandra Bose about our Jiu-Jitsu professor, Mr Takagaki but apparently he has not been able to reply to it as he is touring about in East Bengal. May I now put before you the case of Professor Takagaki whom as you may know, I brought from Japan specially for the purpose of giving a thorough training in the art of Jiu-Jitsu to the students of Bengal. Professor Takagaki comes of a highly distinguished family in Japan and is one of the most well-known experts in Jiu-Jitsu in that country. When I found that our countrymen did not properly realize the importance of the visit of Professor Takagaki to our country, I had to take up myself the entire financial responsibility of his travel and stay in this country. I engaged his services for two years and boys and girls of our institution have received instruction from him with remarkable results. Our students gave a demonstration of Jiu-Jitsu in Calcutta at which several members of the Corporation were present, and I was told that they all appreciated it very much.

It will be a great pity if Professor Takagaki has to be sent back to Japan without the student community in Calcutta ever getting the opportunity of mastering from him the art of self-defence and physical training which I need hardly point out is specially required by our boys and girls. Professor Takagaki, has to make definite arrangements from now for his future programme, and therefore I am writing to you requesting the Corporation to take advantage of his presence in our country and to engage him for giving instructions to the students in Calcutta. Professor Takagaki is willing to remain in Calcutta for the purpose if suitable arrangements are made for him.

I do hope that my appeal will find response in the Calcutta Corporation and that both yourself and Srijukta Subhas Chandra Bose will consider the proposal favourably and retain the services of Professor Takagaki for a cause which concerns the well-being of the students of Bengal.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

1931

44 INDIA AND BRITAIN

FROM THE DEPTHS of the present atmosphere of suffering, the cry has come for the inauguration of a new age of faith and reconciliation, for a fellowship of understanding between races and nations alienated by cruel politics and diplomacy. We in India are ready for a fundamental change in our affairs which will bring harmony and understanding into our relationships with those who have inevitably been brought near to us. We are waiting for a gesture of goodwill from both sides, spontaneous and generous in its faith in humanity, which will create a future of moral federation, of constructive works of public goods, of the inner harmony of peace between the peoples of India and England.

The visit of our friends from England has confirmed the immediate possibility of such intimate fellowship and truth in our mutual relationship, and I feel called upon to appeal to all who have the welfare of humanity at heart to come forward at this critical hour and courageously take upon themselves the task of fulfilling the moral responsibility which is before us of building upon the bare foundation of faith, of acceptance of truth in a spirit of generous, mutual forgiveness.

The memory of the past, however painful it may have been for us all, should never obscure the vision of the perfect, of the future which it is for us jointly to create. Indeed, our experience of the futility of suspicion and hostility must inspire us with a profounder belief in the truth of the simple fellowship of hearts, in the mighty power of creative understanding between individuals as well as Nations inspired by a common urge of love.

March 1931

45 ON PROSELYTISM

I HAVE READ your letter with pleasure. I have only one thing to say: it is this: Do not be always trying to preach your doctrine, but give yourself in love. Your

Western mind is too much obsessed with the idea of conquest and possession; your inveterate habit of proselytism is another form of it. Christ never preached himself or any dogma or doctrine; he preached the love of God. The object of a Christian should be to be like Christ—never like a coolie recruiter trying to bring coolies to his master's tea garden. Preaching your doctrine is no sacrifice at all—it is indulging in a luxury far more dangerous than all the luxuries of material living. It breeds an illusion in your mind that you are doing your duty—that you are wiser and better than your fellow-beings. But the real preaching is in being perfect, which is through meakness and love of self-dedication. If you have strong in you your pride of race, pride of sect, and pride of personal superiority, then it is no use to try to do good to others. They will reject your gift, or even if they do accept it they will not be morally benefitted by it—instances of which can be seen in India every day. On the spiritual plane you cannot *do* good until you *are* good. You cannot preach the Christianity of the Christian sect until you be like Christ—and then you do not preach Christianity, but the love of God, which Christ did.

July 1931

46 SARNATH

THE SPIRITUAL illumination in India, which ages ago shed its radiance over the continent of Asia, raised its memorial on the sacred spot near Benares where Lord Buddha had proclaimed to his, disciples his message of love's supreme fulfilment. Though this monument representing the final hope of liberation for all peoples was buried under dust and forgotten in India, the voice of her greatest son still waits in the heart of silent centuries for a new awakenment to hearken to his call.

Today when in spite of a physical closeness of all nations a universal moral alienation between races has become a fateful menace to all humanity, let us, in this threatening gloom of a militant savagery, before the widening jaws of an organized greed, still rejoice in the fact that the reopening of the ancient monastery of Sarnath is being celebrated by pilgrims from the West and the East.

Numerous are the triumphal towers built to perpetuate the memories of injuries and indignities inflicted by one murdering race upon another, but let us once for all, for the sake of humanity restore to its full significance this great memorial of a generous past to remind us of an ancient meeting of nations in India for the exchange of love, for the establishment of spiritual comradeship among races separated by distance and historical traditions, for the offering of the treasure of immortal wisdom left to the world by the Blessed One to whom we dedicate our united homage.

December 1931

47 IMPRISONMENT OF GANDHI

CABLE TO RAMSAY MACDONALD

THE SENSATIONAL policy of indiscriminate repression being followed by Indian Government starting with imprisonment of Mahatmaji is most unfortunate in causing permanent alienation of our people from yours making it extremely difficult for us to co-operate with your representations for peaceful political adjustment.

January 1932

48 MESSAGE TO IRAQ AIR FORCE

FROM THE beginning of our days man has imagined the seat of divinity in the upper air from which comes light and blows the breath of life for all creatures on this earth. The peace of its dawn, the splendour of its sunset, the voice of eternity in its starry silence have inspired countless generations of men with an ineffable presence of the infinite urging their minds away from the sordid interests of daily life. Man has accepted this dust-laden earth for his dwelling place, for the enacting of the drama of his tangled life ever waiting for a call of perfection from the boundless depth of purity surrounding him in a translucent atmosphere. If in an evil moment man's cruel history should spread its black wings to invade that realm of divine dreams with its cannibalistic greed and fratricidal ferocity then God's curse will certainly descend upon us for that hideous desecration and the last curtain will be rung down upon the world of Man for whom god feels ashamed.

April 1932

49 THE WORLD'S CHILDREN

I AM GLAD to identify myself with the objects of the Save the Children International Union, which seems to me to be the most vital and profoundly significant movement in modern Europe. The rich success that has already been achieved by this Union, in spite of partial response from the public, inadequate means, and inclement political circumstances, only confirms its unchallengeable truth and urges us to join hands, fearlessly, with this movement for the protection of humanity.

War and hostility, incipient and unashamed, still poison the atmosphere

of the modern age—the age, externally, of unbridled greed, competition, and tribal hatred. The one promising sign, however, is the emergence in every country today of idealists who unswervingly keep to their indwelling humanity and uphold the banner of fellowship and amity in the face of adversity and persecution.

The Save the Children International Union is to me a most precious manifestation of this idealism and it is a direct answer to the merciless spirit of organized militarism which wreaks havoc and ruin on the face of our fair earth.

I appeal to all men of faith and love to respond to the noble idealism of this Union by offering all possible help to establish it on a permanent basis.

September, 1932

50 APPEAL TO AMERICA

OWING TO increasing facilities to communication the different countries and peoples of the world have now been brought closer together than before but this external proximity has yet to be transformed into spiritual unity by the united endeavour of individuals and nations. Till this has been achieved the very fact of our material linkedness will be grieviously hurtful to the different peoples which is evidenced just now when disturbances in remote parts of the world helplessly drag into the common net of suffering people who are far removed from the scene of action.

The need of recognizing this urgent fact of our inescapable relatedness in the modern age can no longer be shelved by diplomatic machinations of frenzied politics. Nations like America, therefore, who because of their central geographical position are able to take a more detached view of events should now come forward and offer to lead the human world toward a future of mutual understanding and harmonious co-operation.

America with her internal unity of purpose, her resources of power, and her noble traditions of freedom is peculiarly fitted to exercise this sagacity of mind, and her moral influence is already one of the most powerful assets in the comity of nations. America is young, she has the fire of creative energy, and unfettered by any complicated heritage of ranking political memories of the past, she is free to develop a great edifice of human solidarity. With her gifts of applied science she can liberate the human spirit from the dominance of privation and disease, she can evolve purposive Government of the peoples of the world from her own experience of combining diverse races into one democracy in inter-dependence; she can fearlessly take her stand against exploitation of weaker peoples and uphold the sacred right of human honour above the din of clamorous greed.

My appeal to the America of today is founded on my profound belief in her moral integrity and her true mastery of the resources of power.

December 1932

51 WELCOME ADDRESS TO PROFESSOR DAVOUD

To Aga Poure-Davoud,

We welcome you who have come as a messenger of the great Persian civilization to our land; we welcome you on behalf of Santiniketan and of India.

In different chapters of our history India has communed with your culture; through art and literature and philosophy we have built up a comradeship of civilization. Those were the golden days of Asia's self-expression, when in spite of barriers of language and distance her neighbouring continents carried on a commerce of the spirit, rich in the wealth of realization, of wisdom garnered from many fields of effort and achievement.

Centuries of oblivion have intervened, the dust of time has covered up relics of India's kinship with Iran. But the memory of that ancient union still runs in our blood, and in this great age of Asia's awakening we are once more discovering our affinities, we are rescuing from the debris of vanished ages the undying memorials of our co-operation.

You have come to us with that message of Asia's awakening. Once more we are to light our lamps which ages ago Iran and India placed together on the altar of Asia's common culture. The hymns we then sung in languages closely allied will yet again reverberate under Asia's sky; we shall unite our hearts and our minds in quest of the inmost truths of our soul.

We of Asia are profoundly grateful to your great Monarch who with his indomitable personality and far-reaching creative vision has ushered in a new age in Persia and inspired the neighbouring countries with a spirit of self-reliance and hope. We take this occasion to offer him our deep appreciation of his gracious friendliness in having invited me to his kingdom and given me a taste of Persia's magnanimous hospitality, and in thus lending your services to our Visva-Bharati in Santiniketan. No more wonderful manner of expresssing his cordial fellowship could be chosen than thus sending to us one of the noblest emissaries of Persia's culture.

Great is our joy today that we welcome you, our friend from Iran, to this *ashrama* of Santiniketan, where we have taken up the task of revealing the deepest mind of Asia. May our collaboration bind Persia and India close together in ties of intimate comradeship, uniting us once again in the responsibility jointly shared of restoring to the modern age the great gift which Asia has to offer to humanity.

January 1933

52 ON THE CENTENARY OF WILBERFORCE

A CENTURY HAS passed since Wilberforce showed a noble courage to condemn the thriving business of slave hunting. It is right that we should remember it with proper ceremony and bring our homage to the memory of the great man. But at the same time this should be the occasion for us to acknowledge with shame that the evil has not died with his own death, that in the dark corners of civilization slavery still lurks hiding its name and nourishing its spirit. It is there in our plantations, in factories, in business offices, in the punitive department of government where the primitive vindictiveness of man claims special privilege to indulge in fierce barbarism. A considerable section of men still seems to have an innate sympathy for the strong seeking victims in its chase of profit and power and what is worse there are terrible movements of benevolent idealism relentlessly smothering freedom in its path of ruthless recruitment. Humanity ever waits for the voice of judgment against uncontrolled cultivation of slavery which invades all parts of the civilized world offering enormous bribes to the conscience of man spreading a callousness of heart that is unashamed of its hooliganism.

July 1933

53 DESHAPRIYA J.M. SENGUPTA

JATINDRA MOHAN IS one of those valiant fighters for the country's cause to whom no sacrifice was too great for the uplift of his motherland. He gave up his lucrative profession, with his whole family embraced a life of suffering and sacrifice by throwing himself in the very thick of the struggle. A man of noble manners and winning courtesy, he was a most beloved political leader of India. India can ill-afford to lose such a leader at this critical juncture in her national life.

There can be but little doubt that his untimely death was hastened by his long incarceration as a political prisoner. He was a man of peace and refinement but when his country called he rejoiced to offer his life at the alter of his country's freedom. The memory of such a life nobly lived and freely given is at once India's glory and shame.

August 1933

54 HOMAGE TO ISLAM

SIRATUN NABI

ISLAM IS ONE of the few great religions of the world and the responsibility is immense upon its followers who must, in their lives, bear testimony to the greatness of their faith. Our one hope of mutual reconciliation between the communities inhabiting India, of bringing about a truly civilized attitude of mind towards each other in this unfortunate country depends not merely on the realization of an intelligent national self-interest, but on the eternal source of inspiration that comes from the immortal lines of these messengers of truth who have been the beloved of God and lovers of men. I take this advantage of this auspicious occasion today when I may join my Moslem brothers in offering my homage of adoration to the grand prophet of Islam and invoke his blessings for India which is in dire need of succour and solace.

26 November 1933

MESSAGE FOR THE PROPHET NUMBER OF THE PESHWA

I TAKE THIS opportunity to offer my homage of veneration to the Holy Prophet Mohammad, one of the greatest personalities born in this world, who has brought a new and potent force of life into human history, a vigorous ideal of purity in religion, and I earnestly pray that those who follow his path will justify their noble faith in their life and the sublime teaching of their master by serving the cause of civilization in building the history of the modern India, helping to maintain peace and mutual goodwill in the field of our national life.

27 February 1936

55 BIHAR EARTHQUAKE AND THE MAHATMA

IT HAS CAUSED me painful surprise to find Mahatma Gandhi accusing those who blindly follow their own social custom of untouchability for having got down God's vengeance upon certain parts of Bihar, evidently specially selected for His desolating displeasure! It is all the more unfortunate, because this unscientific and materialistic view of things is too readily accepted by large sections of our countrymen.

I keenly feel indignity of it when I am compelled to utter the truism that physical catastrophes have their inevitable and exclusive origin in a certain combination of physical facts. Unless we believe in the inexorableness of

universal laws, in the working of which God himself never interferes, imperilling thereby the integrity of His own creation we find it impossible to justify His ways on occasions like the one which has so sorely stricken us in an overwhelming manner and scale.

If we associate the ethical principles with cosmic phenomena we shall have to admit that human nature is morally superior to a Providence that preaches lessons on good behaviour in orgies of the worst behaviour possible. For we can never imagine any civilized ruler of man making indiscriminate examples of casual victims, including children and members of the untouchable community themselves, in order to impress others dwelling at a safe distance who possibly deserve severer condemnation.

Though we cannot point to any period of human history that is free from iniquities of the darkest kind, we still find citadels of malevolence that remain unshaken; factories that cruelly thrive upon the poverty and ignorance of famished cultivators. It only shows that the law of gravitation does not in the least respond to the stupendous load of callousness that accumulates till the moral foundations of our society begin to show dangerous cracks and civilizations are undermined.

What is truly tragic is the fact that the argument Mahatma Gandhi used, by exploiting an event of cosmic disturbance, far better suits the psychology of his opponents than his own; and it would not have surprised me if they had taken the opportunity of holding him and his followers responsible for the visitation of divine anger. As for us, we feel perfectly secure in the faith that our own sins and errors, however enormous, have not got enough force to drag down the structure of Creation to ruin.

We who are immensely grateful to Mahatma Gandhi for inducing by his wonderful inspiration freedom from fear and feebleness in the minds of our countrymen, feel profoundly hurt when any words from his mouth may emphasize elements of unreason which is the fundamental source of all blind powers that drive us against freedom and self respect.

5 February 1934

56 PROTEST AGAINST THE NAZIS

DEAR FRIEND,

I thank you for drawing my attention to your address on 'Civilization's Debt to Asia,' published in *Israel's Messenger*, April, 1934.

To me racial hatred in any form is a creed of barbarism and I cannot recognize the value of any cause in whose name nations and peoples indulge their gluttony of violence. We in India are striving to safeguard our growing spirit of nationalism from this dangerous perversion of racial hatred, and when I see Western nations building their faith on this barbarism and making

elaborate preparations for a scientific slaughter, I cannot help feeling proud of my people who, poor as they are and persecuted, yet are unwilling to win human rights through brutish ways. It revives my faith in the undying spirit of the East.

As regards the Hitler regime in Germany, we read different versions of it. And certainly it cannot be denied that the German people were goaded to many acts of desperate folly by the humiliations imposed on them by the victorious nations of the War. Nevertheless, if the brutalities we read of are authentic, then no civilized conscience can allow compromise with them. The insults offered to my friend Einstein have shocked me to the point of torturing my faith in modern civilization. I can only draw consolation from the hope that it was an unhappy act done in a drunken mood and not the sober choice of a people so gifted as the Germans.

All my life I have cried against blindness of prejudice that divides man from man and called upon my fellowmen all over the globe to stretch their hands in a common endeavour to realize the nobility of the human in each one of us. Today when this most enduring heritage from the truly great ones of all races, is being assaulted by the aggressive communalism of the Blacks and the fanatic materialistic idealism of the Reds on the other, I once again raise my humble voice of protest and warning, however feeble it may have grown with age. In our frantic despair to save the community let us not crush the free individual on the steps of whose sublime heresies humanity has ever been rising upwards.

August 1934

57 MY IDEALS WITH REGARD TO THE SREEBHAVANA

I

FIRST OF ALL the Sreebhavana should form itself into a perfect social unit composed of students, the Superintendent and the other officials and not merely remain an aggregate of individuals for some education purpose.

It is to be remembered that the Sreebhavana is not a final creation of any particular individual or of any group of persons. Those who are its inmates are to contribute their life to it and make it living. It should be their own creation—every moment of its growth. Let them endow it with 'sweetness and light,' order, grace, cleanliness, and feel proud of its personality, which should reflect their own corporate being.

This is my earnest desire that those who are connected with the Sreebhavana should shoulder its responsibility, keeping the ideals of Santiniketan *ashrama* in their mind. In fact, this sharing of responsibility is an important item of education and the surest means of developing self-respect.

Girls in our *ashrama* can demand a reasonable amount of liberty in their everyday life. But true liberty is everywhere based upon severe discipline of responsibility. It may be lazily more comfortable to be ruled from outside than to take up the burden of freedom about our own management.

Since the establishment of the *ashrama*, it has ever been my wish that students should own their obligations in guiding, helping, and keeping each other straight, and preventing individuals from going into excesses which may bring discredit upon them all. In other words, I have always hoped that there should be the foundation of real *swaraj* in the student-life of the ashrama. Those who have no moral control over themselves are, from the very nature, sure to be subjected to compulsion from outside.

The degree of indifference showed by students in realizing the dignity of their responsibility in spite of their opportunity has been the degree of failure in self-rule in the *ashrama*.

I hope the girls of Sreebhavana will take advantage of this freedom of self-government and offer a permanent principle of conduct to the whole *ashrama*.

It is extremely desirable for the students' commonwealth that a set of rules of common behaviour should develop quite spontaneously and from within. This spirit of self-regulation should ever enjoy a free flow and lead to the fulfilment of our best hopes and endeavours. This success will depend entirely upon the goodwill and co-operation of the girls and not upon any set of fixed code of laws.

II

It is needless to say that our girls should have perfect manners in their behaviour towards each other and in their dealings with outsiders. It is ugly to be unmannerly and particularly for women it is unpardonable.

In every civilized community people have their forms of greeting; when girls meet the first time in the day, they should get used to observing the traditional form of courtesy to one another,—which is *namaskara*. The same salutation should be extended to guests. Needless to say, I expect them to get up from their seats and properly salute their teachers when meeting them. When there are newcomers in the hostel, they should not remain indifferent, but enquire after their wants and help them in every way possible. A new student should never feel that she has come in the midst of an inhospitable crowd. In the behaviour of older students among themselves there should be manifestations of friendliness and comradeship born of close association and co-operation.

Moderation in behaviour, in social communication, in expressions of emotion, is an essential part of good manners. We should remember that boisterousness must never be mistaken for exuberance of spirit. Good manners should be an outcome of good nature which reveals itself by willingly respecting others' legitimate claims, even going out of one's way to look to their convenience. It is positively objectionable to be noisy in the neighbourhood when some one is studying, to disturb one who wants to go to

bed when it is due time and to enter somebody else's room without permission, ransacking her things, making her bed untidy, looking into her papers or letters, taking away books or articles of use. To get addicted to the pernicious habit of enjoying and circulating scandals and mischievous gossip breeds in one's character a vulgarity of a malignant type which must be completely eradicated from our nature.

Cleanliness and orderliness should never be neglected. There are some who seem to take pride in displaying slovenliness as a protest against indulgence in luxury. But well-dressed tidiness and foppishness do not belong to the same class. Attractiveness in one's dress may show a high quality of aesthetic sense and go hand in hand with a beautiful spirit of simplicity. It necessarily need not be for ostentation but for taking trouble to offer our respect for others. If we are careless in our dress when meeting people, we rudely show that we do not care for them.

Orderliness and tidiness are not only comfortable for ourselves but they reveal a spirit of hospitality to others and therefore become a duty which should scrupulously be observed in the arrangement of furniture, and the general care of the rooms and their surroundings. We naturally associate woman's presence with beauty and cleanliness in her home, these being an expression of her innate love of purity and her desire to please.

Where a number of persons are thrown together, we have to abide by certain unanimity of behaviour for the comfort and convenience of all. It is desirable that obedience to rules of decency and efficiency should be spontaneous, for it is truly uncivilized to violate those rules which are for common welfare. We should leave our beds in the morning at the scheduled time, perform our morning toilet, join the *Baitalik* in clean clothes, go and have our meals at the dining room in perfect order, maintain proper discipline in the class and on the playfield, be considerate and serviceable to each other at festive parties or picnics, enjoy walks in the evenings and after dusk return to the Hostel for study or music or entertainment. We should perform such daily round of tasks and diversions in a perfect spirit of grace never giving occasion to conflicts and confusions.

1934

58 COMMUNAL AWARD: TO MADAN MOHAN MALVIYA

MY DEAR PANDITJI,

I got your communication regarding the proposed Nationalist Conference in due time but could not reply to it earlier as we were celebrating the Rain Festival in the *Ashrama* and had number of guests from Calcutta and other places.

You all know that I have always disapproved of the Communal Award and I hope that our leaders will join their forces to save from its paralysing grip the political integrity of our nation. But not being a politician myself I shrink from taking part in a movement which I fear may create dissension in our ranks and strengthen the hands of our opponents. The responsibility is too great for me to identify myself with any particular party which is fighting for the cause.

My dear Panditji,

I address this to Mahomedans as well as Hindus with the most sincere desire for the good of all sections of the community, I urge that Hindus and Mahomedans should sit together dispassionately to consider the Communal Award and its implications to arrive at an agreed solution of the communal problem. It is needless to point out that self-government cannot be based on communal divisions, and separate electorate. No responsible system of government can be possible without mutual understanding of our communities and united representations at legislatures. We must concentrate all our forces to evolve a better understanding and co-operation between different sections of our people and thus lay a solid foundation for social and political reconstruction of our Motherland. I deprecate all expressions of angry feelings and most strongly appeal to Hindus and Musalmans to avoid saying and doing anything that may increase communal tension and further postpone the understanding between our communities without which there can be no peaceful progress in our country.

18 August 1934

59 FAREWELL TO ABDUL GHAFAR KHAN

We have you here with us only for a short period but we will not measure the worth of the event by the standard of time. Those really great, whose hearts are for all, who belong to all the lands of the world, transcend also the bounds of movements; they are for all time. Believe me, the memory of this short visit of yours to the *Ashrama* will ever remain fresh in our hearts.

Truth is the very foundation of your life, and I am sure that you radiate its influence all around you. We have realized this too, that all our efforts are everyday being frustrated for lack of this devotion to truth. You have come to this land whose unhappy being is shattered into fragments, in order to fulfil the purpose of providence to save her from the poison of fatricidal hatred which she is drugging herself to self-destruction. I have not the slightest doubts that you have been able to stimulate the hearts of our folk here with some of that great force of character which is your own. Pray accept the

grateful homage of all of us. This is our earnest prayer that you be long spared to help this land sick unto death towards vigorous health and truth.

15 September 1934

60 MY YOUNG FRIENDS

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

Let me assure you that the child within me is still actively alive. I cannot prove it by addressing you from this higher platform and solemnly posing as a distinguished visitor, frightening you into proper behaviour. But take it from me that if I had the opportunity to find my place in your midst I could easily share your life and your dreams. Do not be deceived by my grey exterior but keep your judgment in suspense till you are able to read my writings which contain spontaneous records of my confessions. There you will find expressions of a mind which refuses to grow old and callous in its touch with the great world to which we have been born. No doubt I am compelled to perform serious duties that help me to maintain my prestige of a mature age among the community of the grown-ups, but the best part of my activity has the inconsequential character of a mere play, fashioning structure of phantasy with airy nothings. It is in answer to the messages which come directly to my naked heart from the colourful playground of creation, where ever crowd fleeting images, the play things of the Eternal, in the blue of the sky and the green of the earth.

I have often received garlands from my fellow beings in recognition of some service or other which they consider as useful, but I have felt every day of my life, mother Nature crowning me with her morning light and kissing me with her fragrantly tender breeze, not because I have done anything valuable but because I have loved her. I have lived in this great world not only as a member of a society or of a group but as a light-hearted vagabond, free to roam or rest in the immense courtyard of this brown earth, chequered with lights and shadows. I have lived into the mystery of its being. You must not despise me because I may know less mathematics than you do, but I have come to the secret of existence not through any analytical mazes of exploration, but as a child approaching its mother's chamber. Because of this I stand close to you, the young hearts whom my heart recognizes as its fellow voyagers in the open road of light and life. This is by way of my introduction to you as a poet in which capacity I may claim my entry into the pure-blooded aristocracy of the child. I know you do not fully understand my works, but you may safely ignore them for they do not in any way affect you in your examination result. Yet I feel certain that this much you have realized from my talk that I have tried to approach you as your friend and not as your instructor and this pure friendliness of mine may continue to offer you companionship in my literary

works when you grow older. Other distinguished visitors will come to you in future in the guise of advisers relentlessly taking up a great deal more time than I have done and then you will remember me gratefully for the merciful manner in which I have treated you in this address of mine which is remarkably short considering the occasion that has claimed it.

December 1934

61 A LETTER TO AN ENGLISH FRIEND

DEAR FRIEND,

What you have said in your letter about certain opinions expressed by some of our young professors does, no doubt, represent the mental attitude of some of the young generation of modern India. It is a mentality bred of utter despair, a bitterness generated in a closed atmosphere of a narrow prospect of life. Mostly they are men of keen intellect, confident of their own attainments who find it hard to forget that they have lost their best opportunities and have been deprived of their life's fulfilment. They harbour a futile anger against their destiny and seek an outlet for their brooding vengefulness by hurling defiance at those ideals which men have held as sacred. They have readily accepted the teaching of some modern pundits of the West, that religion offers refuge to the cowards and supplies opiate to the mind that is helplessly compelled to suffer.

You have hinted in your letter about constructive programme, but you must know that those persons are extremely rare who have the genius to construct anything worth building, in an environment where things have to be begun from the very beginning, very often with meagre means and in unsympathetic circumstances. The burden of poverty in our country has been cruelly heavy and widespread, the training to fight it is absent, and on the top of it the depression of spirit that causes inertia finds its shelter in a body whose vitality has been run down owing to the want of nourishment and the consequent series of illnesses amidst surroundings devoid of proper medical help. It hurts me very deeply to find the best of our young minds indulging in a militant form of cynicism borrowed from the West, the cynicism which is all the more virulent because of its blankly negative character, destitute of all true vision. Because they have grown callously incapable of the deeper enjoyment of spiritual life they helplessly become addicted to cheap political sensationalism. I understand them, I suffer for them and I can never keep myself away from their wounded selves. I can only nourish a pathetic hope in my mind that in the end the wisdom which is of our own soil will find its way into their life, and if my own inspiration fails them I shall ever blame my own feeble power.

The boys with whom you had a talk are college students newly come who

have not yet been naturalised in our *ashrama*. They are immature in mind; their education imperfect. Like all young men of similar stage they like to talk loud in order to hide their deficiency in language and feign scepticism because they are lacking in all thoughts; and they believe that by denying all time-honoured notions of truth they prove their own superiority. This must be a passing phase which a number of them, I hope, will outgrow and the rest of them will go on flaunting a livery of the smart only because they are incurably foolish.

1934

62 ISHOPANISHAT

(TO MAHADEV DESAI)

DEAR MAHADEO,

First, let me make a confession—I have lost your letter—or very likely I took such a special care of it that it is not available even to me. However, I remember you asked me in your letter to explain to you the talk I had with you about *Ishopanishat*. For some time I have been extremely busy and therefore I have no choice but to be brief.

Ishopanishat has, from human point of view, divided truth into two aspects:—one dealing with life and another with immortality. The characteristic note of this *Upanishat* is in the emptiness it lays upon the importance of both these aspects, none of which should be separated from the other. Avidya, which is the cult of the finite, deals with life—and according to *Ishopanishat* man should strive to live his full term of life in order to perform his *Karma*. For human beings, life is not merely a physiological progress, but it is fulfilment of his *Karma*. True *Karma* is not a series of activities generated by blind impulse of instincts or appetites. *Karma*, which gives meaning to our life, cannot be performed in ignorance or loss of truth—physical and moral. When through the help of *avidya*, the science of the finite, our rational and moral life reaches its fulfilment, then it is saved. The life lived in pursuance of mere animal needs, guided by a superficial and empirical knowledge of this world, is death for man. On the contrary, the life that has perfected through enlightened *Karma*, which is not fixed forms of ritualism, or unthinking conformity to customs, but which represents in its varied activities Man's reason, and will, and power of aesthetic enjoyment, lays the path towards the spiritual realization of the infinite. For the infinite is nothing negative,—it is not an emptiness that can be reached through an absolute elimination of the finite, but in it the finite has its ultimate meaning. And therefore according to *Ishopanishat avidya* and *vidya* both have to be perfected and harmonised. The cult of the finite exclusively pursued leads us to no final goal and yet it gives us something which is concrete, but the cult of the infinite excluding the finite is an abstraction,

it is an illimitable abyss of nihilism. The East in the modern time has been beaten in the race of life, because it has neglected to cultivate the science of the finite, and the West is being driven into conflict of passions and unmeaning multiplication of things because it has lost its respect for the cult of the infinite. The salvation of humanity lies in the meeting of the East and West in a perfect harmony of truth.

1935

63 RAMCHANDRA SHARMA UNDERTAKES FAST: TAGORE'S APPEAL

I KNOW FULLY well that my entreaties to those who have so far turned a deaf ear to the message preached through the impending death of this great soul, would go in vain. Despite that I would once again beseech my countrymen not to let the memory of this stern refusal to the call of this noble soul remain as a perpetual blot in the annals of our motherland. Wherever else this kind-hearted man has staked his life before the present attempt for the votaries of the deities concerned, they had not allowed him to die. If it should now be Bengal's turn to compel Pandit Ramchandra to embrace death by persisting in the utterly callous attitude towards this movement, then for that act of sheer inhumanity the entire nation shall repent heavily—there is no escape from that. I have nothing to say but to send up earnest prayers to God Almighty to so ordain things that the door for avoiding this grim tragedy may not be irrevocably banged yet.

1935

64 'A MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE'

DEAR VIDYAVATI,

I do not know how adequately to impart my experience to you. I shall simply speak to you of an incident full of the most poignant sorrow of my life. My youngest son, beautiful in appearance and lovable in character, was about sixteen when he was invited to spend his vacation with a boy friend of his in Monghyr. I hastened to his side when I suddenly received a telegram in Calcutta, informing me of a serious attack of illness causing grave anxiety to his host who was a doctor. The boy lingered for three days after my arrival, trying repeatedly to assure me that he was free from all physical sufferings. When his last moment was about to come I was sitting alone in the dark in an adjoining room, praying intently for his passing away to his next stage of

existence in perfect peace and well-being. At a particular point of time my mind seemed to float in a sky where there was neither darkness nor light, but a profound depth of calm, a boundless sea of consciousness without a ripple or murmur. I saw the vision of my son lying in the heart of the Infinite and I was about to cry to my friend, who was nursing the boy in the next room, that the child was safe, that he had found his liberation. I felt like a father who had sent his son across the sea, relieved to learn of his safe arrival and success in finding his place. I felt at once that the physical nearness of our dear ones to ourselves is not the final meaning of their protection. It is merely a means of satisfaction to our own selves and not necessarily the best that could be wished for them. I believe that the love which is true can help the departed spirit in crossing the boundaries of earthly life and finding its spiritual destination. And therefore it should be our sacred duty to direct that love of ours, through concentration of will, towards winning for them their best fulfilment and never to waste it in futile desire for our own consolation. Of course, all bereavements naturally bring sufferings, but let us through them find freedom and joy by realizing that they are our sacrifices which we dedicate for the salvation of our beloved ones, and that by our own emancipation we bring emancipation to them also.

With heartfelt sympathy and blessings,

27 December 1935

65 TO INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

To The President, Indian National Congress, Bombay

My warmest greetings on the happy occasion of Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The destiny of India has chosen for its ally the power of soul and not that of muscle. And she is to raise the history of man from the muddy level of physical conflicts to a higher moral altitude.

27 December 1935

66 THE RICE WE EAT

WHEN A PEOPLE'S diet takes a vicious path of its own impoverishment, it causes a graver mischief than any act of cruelty inflicted by an alien power. Such has unfortunately been the case in our province. Rice has been our staple food from which we have for generations received a great part of our health, strength, energy and intelligence. But curiously enough, especially among the

upper class of our community, a fatal epidemic of foolishness has become prevalent which allows this principal food-stuff of ours to be depleted of its precious nourishing element. Rice mills are menacingly spreading fast extending throughout the province an unholy alliance with malaria and other flag-bearers of death robbing the whole people of its vitality through a constant weakening of its nourishment. We not only boil away an essential amount of nutrition from our daily ration of rice but also use elaborate machinery to polish off its skin which contains its most vital gift. This is a self-imposed form of famine deliberately welcomed by a people who had already been suffering from the scarcity of milk and that of ghee of a non-poisonous kind. One of the consequent diseases in the form of beri-beri has specially chosen its victims from the Bengalis, who still remain indifferent to its lesson. There had been, I am told, some proposal to check the progress of this fatal evil through the intervention of legislature. I am glad that it failed, for the people must not be treated like eternal babies carefully protected by its appointed nurses from its own utter stillness. It is only for ourselves to exercise our intelligence for choosing our food which must be wholesome and sustaining. It is for the people themselves to realize that in the long run it is not cheaper to substitute the callous force of machinery for the indigenous rice-hullar, oil press and grind stone for crushing the wheat. Physical vigour born of healthy meals is valuable, not only for itself but for its power of enhancing one's earning capacity. Then again, we have to take into account the immense importance of our rural economic life whose course has been cruelly obstructed by the iron monster robbing our village women of some of their natural means of livelihood and the labouring class of its right to gather its simple living out of the gleanings from the people's own green field of life. It has gone on for long, this tampering with the time-honoured irrigation of living, in this country causing large desert tracks of privation in our villages. Would it be too much to expect a body of volunteers in Bengal to form a league whose members should take a solemn vow to use *dhenki*-hulled rice for their meals not allowing its nourishment to be stupidly thrown away by wasteful cooking? Could they not realize that it is the perpetuation of a national calamity to which most of us is daily helping by instituting in our homes an insiduous method of suicide?

28 December 1935

67 MESSAGE TO WORLD PEACE CONGRESS

If peace is to be anything more than the mere absence of war, it must be founded on the strength of the just and not on the weariness of the weak. The groan of peace in Abyssinia is no less ghastly than the howl of war in Spain. If

then we are to strive for that true peace, in which the satisfaction of one people is not built on the frustration of another, then the average peace-loving citizen of the successful nations of today must extricate himself from the obvious anomaly of wishing for peace whilst sharing in the spoils of war,—which exposes his wish to the charge of mere pretence. He must not let himself be bribed on the promise of prosperity and honour and call it patriotism. We cannot have peace until we deserve it by paying its full price—which is, that the strong must cease to be greedy and the weak must learn to be bold.

1936

68 NEW EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP

THOUGH MY FRAIL health deprives me of the privilege of being present in the midst of this gathering, I have great pleasure in welcoming you all on this occasion, which is distinguished by the presence of our guests from overseas. I am particularly happy to note the international character of this conference, for though each country may have its particular problems claiming particular solutions, true education, like all great arts, must have its basis in principles that condition human development everywhere. It may be my bias as an artist, but education seems to me essentially an art whose problem we solve not by discussing systems but by discovering creative sources of inspiration. When this source is a human one it dwells in a teacher who is ever a student and therefore through whom a perennial intellectual eagerness acts as a dynamic force spreading in its surroundings a disinterested impulse for knowledge. Those who have garnered for good their stock-in-trade as school masters and shut their minds against the growing harvest of truth can only reproduce their lessons as gramophone records, repeating with dull accuracy stale passages from secondhand stores. They burden the mind but seldom nourish it. Teachers should be ideal comrades of those whom they teach and through the course of teaching, their own minds should be stirred in sympathy with the stirring of the young minds. The joy of imbibing lessons oneself ought to find its true expression in infusing it in others. When we see such a living enthusiasm lacking in those who act as guides to their pupils, who are ready to raise to them ruling rods from a distance but not offer them the helping hand by their side, as too often is the case, they should be reminded that they have chosen a wrong vocation and should for the sake of humanity change it without delay for that of a jail warden. A genuine sympathy and respect for the students creates an atmosphere of freedom in the classes which is indispensable to the commerce of culture which is named education.

Another stream of inspiration ever flowing towards us comes from the heart of mother nature when she is generous in her gift of light and sky, in the colourful pageantry of her seasons. I can never forget the misery which I

suffered as a boy when I was daily deprived of human sympathy within the school walls and nature's ministration of beauty around them. Young minds gradually forget their need of these vitamins of life and are taught to rely upon some substitute fare of lessons considered to be principal elements in the muscle building of the intellect. I believe that it is imperatively necessary that all important educational institutions should be founded in those places where nature reveals her eternal majesty of beauty and grandeur according to which our places of pilgrimage have generally been chosen in India. Consecration of our life waits to be received from nature's own hand and it should accompany our training of heart, mind and imagination, a training which is not only for the production of timber of a high market value, if mind could be compared to a tree, but for exhibiting the wealth of its flowers which contributes to the joy of creation, often without our noticing it.

Another necessary factor of education is the environment of national mind. But unfortunately we have not had the opportunity of cultivating it in India for over a century and such a privation can never be compensated for by the establishment of law and order, which our government has so often boasted of, and which is merely an imposition from outside, superficial in its genuineness. In the olden days in India there was a uniformity of culture, having its guardians and centres of distribution in different places which may be called university towns. Like as in the organ of the heart, the life blood of the common culture was generated and kept pure in these places where great scholars gathered and owned their sacred responsibility to the society to offer their learning freely to those who came to claim it. Today our few universities are like oases in the heart of a vast desert of illiteracy, whose gifts are for a few, producing a language and mental diet that remain foreign to the multitude. Such a meagre education, product of very narrow reservation plots, often has reactionary symptoms upon the nature of those who are classed as the educated, the strong gravitational pull of their surroundings violently dragging them back into the dark cell of medieval unreason. Such an education can never attain its depth of reality and when our foreign critics laugh at some imperfect manifestation of our minds, very often turning it into a propaganda for humiliating us before the world, they seem to be blissfully ignorant of their own responsibility for such a tragically stupid result.

Nor may we underrate the great influence exercised on the child's mind by the values that prevail in the society in which he is born and brought up. If these values be perverted, no sort or amount of formal education can save the child from their destructive effect. For these values affect the mind as subtly and surely as the physical climate on the body. Good education of children is not possible unless good ideals govern the society. Methods of education may be modern and scientific but they will only chain and debase the mind more effectively if the purposes they serve are ignoble. Educationists therefore must remain more or less helpless in an age where collective greed is glorified as patriotism and inhuman butchery is made the measure of heroism.

I have taken the liberty of drawing your attention to the universal

principles that must govern the value of education as an art and determine its success for good or ill. As regards the particular problems that relate to this country I leave them for your mature deliberations, which I shall read with great pleasure. My own ideas regarding these problem I have emphasised so often before my countrymen that I am reluctant to reiterate what have come to be regarded as mere platitudes. And platitudes indeed all ideas tend to become unless worked out in some living form. I am therefore glad that some of you will be coming after the conference to our *ashrama* at Santiniketan where I may be able to show you how I have struggled for the last thirty years to create for our children an appropriate atmosphere, giving it the principal place in our programme of teaching. For atmosphere there must be for developing the sensitiveness of soul, for affording mind its true freedom of sympathy.

Now that Mahatma Gandhi has taken up the cause of mass education in earnest we may be sure of great results in the near future. Already great interest has been roused in the country and controversy provoked over the question whether education can be made selfsupporting. Before you too are likewise provoked to violent agreement or disagreement with the proposal I would remind you that Gandhiji's genius is essentially practical, which means that his practice is immeasurably superior to his theory. As the scheme stands on paper, it seems to assume that material utility, rather than development of personality, is the end of education, that while education in the true sense of the word may be still available for a chosen few who can afford to pay for it, the utmost that the masses can have is to be trained to view the world they live in the perspective of the particular craft they are to employ for their livelihood. It is true that as things are even that is much more than what the masses are actually getting but it is nevertheless unfortunate that even in our ideal scheme, education should be doled out in insufficient rations to the poor, while the feast remains reserved for the rich. I cannot congratulate a society or a nation that calmly excludes play from the curriculum of the majority of its children's education and gives in its stead a vested interest to the teachers in the market value of the pupils' labour. But these defects seem such only on paper, for no man loves the children of the poor more than the Mahatma, and we may be sure that when the scheme is actually worked out by him we shall discover in it only one more testimony to the genius of this practical sage whose deeds surpass his word.

February 1936

69 THE ENGLISH IN INDIA

THE BRITISH Empire is pluming itself on its generosity in making over some part of the machinery of the Government of India into our hands. What is distressing me is that the poisonous element mixed in the boon offered to us

will continue to work noxiously for an indefinite time to come. It will ever keep inflamed the communal passions in Bengal, threatening her peace, which is an essential environment for all economic, social and cultural progress. The Moslems are apparently failing to realize that an unbalanced politics will never serve their own interest for long, that the communal split amounts to cutting at the root of national life.

You know, and I have never tried to keep it secret from anyone, that of all the Western peoples who have direct dealings with alien races I respect most the British people. Many things have recently happened in our country to wound us to the quick, in the doing of which British agents were concerned, but of which it is forbidden to speak. These have embittered the hearts of our countrymen at large though the punishment has fallen only on our youths. In spite of it all, I still say that it will not do to isolate such events when coming to our own judgement of the British people.

There are other great nations in Europe who exercise dominion over foreign peoples. And we cannot but have a sigh of relief whenever we recall that is not they who are our rulers. What I am writing to you now, and the freedom with which our representatives in the Legislatures expatiate on the shortcomings of the Government, would not have been possible under the domination of any other European nation which holds subject races under its autocratic grip. We admire the United States from a distance, because we have no relations with her. But, apart from her inhuman treatment of the Negroes, the instances of rank injustice perpetrated by her highest courts of law are such as do not fortunately belong to our normal experience in India.

When our rulers are annoyed, however contrary they may act for the time to their true national character they cannot altogether get rid of all sense of shame. For, in the nation to which they belong they have noble personalities who by that very fact are its truest representatives to whose judgement they cannot but defer although they try to come when irritated, close to the blood-and-iron methods with some superficial modifications. Nevertheless they cannot come down to the point of saying "We shall do just as we like"—as the Badshahs and Nawabs of old used to say, as some of our ruling chiefs of to day would like to say and as the Fascist nations of Europe are actuals saying. Here, when we complain of the frightful conditions prevailing in the Andamans, then, even to such weaklings as we are, they are impelled seriously to report with benevolence beaming from their faces that the Andamans are as beautifully perfect from the moral and physical point of view as could be desired for the condemned. Had those Englishmen whose practice departs widely from English ideals been capable of openly insulting those ideals how few of the speakers in our legislative bodies would have remained outside that "penal paradise"?

I have seen many great Englishmen. They never hesitate to stand up against wrong whether done by others or by their own countrymen. These may not be statesmen, for statesmen are not usually to be reckoned as true representatives of the nation. If the persons wielding political power in

England had been able to ignore the silent judgement of the great minds in their country they might have succeeded in levelling to the dust all the best canons of humanity—as has been done in Germany and Italy, and as might have been done in England if the new-fledged Fascists there had their way. In that case the Andamans would have been fully populated and the key of the speeches in our Legislatures pitched several tones lower—as in the case of Germany and Italy.

I must admit that my admiration of British character, in so far as that character is reflected in the governing of India, with its penal system, whipping, and solitary cell does not come to much more than a comparative statement. It is inhuman enough for us, as you must have found from the narrative of Jawaharlal's prison experience and also from numerous instances of political prisoners, in the prime of their youth, coming out to die after a few years of gaol, miserably broken down in health and spirit. And it is but meagre consolation to us to think that it could even have been worse according to the present standard of civilization that prevails in a large part of the West.

Some of our countrymen are annoyed with me and ask: If you have such high respect for the British people why do you not hanker for a perpetuation of their rule? My reply is that thus to be drawn into the widespread net of a foreign Imperialism can never be good for India. It would have been otherwise had this Empire connoted an undivided body politic. But the conditions prevailing in the cowsheds of a dairyman are not to be compared with those obtaining in his homestead. In the former the question is one of the ample production of milk and of getting burdens cheaply carried. If its occupants display their horns in asserting their self-determination no time is lost in bringing home to them their true position.

The chronic want of food and water, the lack of sanitation and medical help, the neglect of means of communication, the poverty of educational provision, the all pervading spirit of depression that I have myself seen to prevail in our villages after over a hundred years of British rule make me despair of its beneficence. It is almost a crime to talk of Soviet Russia in this country, and yet I cannot but refer to the contrast it presents. I must confess to the envy with which my admiration was mixed to see the extraordinary enthusiasm and skill with which the measures for producing food, providing education, fighting against disease were being pushed forward in their vast territories. There is no separating line of mistrust or insulting distinctions between Soviet Europe and Soviet Asia. I am only comparing the state of things obtaining there and here as I have actually seen them. And I state my conclusion that what is responsible for our condition in the so-called British Empire is the yawning gulf between its dominant and subjugated sections.

On the other hand, it has to be recognized that there is an inevitableness in the fate that has overtaken Hindu India. We have divided and subdivided ourselves into mincemeat, not fit to live but only to be swallowed. Never up to now has our disjointed society been able to ward off any threatening evil. We are a suicidal race, ourselves keeping wide open for ages, with marvellous

ingenuity, gaps that we are forbidden to cross under penalty and cracks that are considered to be too sacred to be repaired because of their antiquity.

October 1936

70 SPANISH CIVIL WAR

TO THE CONSCIENCE OF HUMANITY

IN SPAIN, the world civilization is being menaced and trampled under foot. Against the democratic government of the Spanish people Franco has raised the standard of revolt. International Fascism is pouring men and money in aid of the rebels. Moors and foreign legionaries are sweeping over the beautiful plains of Spain; trailing behind them death, hunger and desolation.

Madrid, the proud centre of culture and art is in flames. Her priceless treasures of art are being bombed by the rebels. Even hospitals and creches are not spared. Women and children are murdered, made homeless and destitute.

The devastating tide of International Fascism must be checked. In Spain this inhuman recrudescence of obscurantism, of racial prejudice, of rapine and glorification of war must be given the final rebuff. Civilization must be saved from its being swamped by barbarism.

At this hour of the supreme trial and suffering of the Spanish people, *I appeal to the conscience of humanity.*

"Help the peoples' front in Spain, help the Government of the people, cry in million voices 'Halt' to reaction come in your millions to the aid of democracy, to the succour of civilization and culture."

March 1937

71 APPEAL TO THE UNITED PARTY OF SIND

OFFICE ACCEPTANCE is only an outward temptation and practically the Hindus must realize this before hankering after offices.

Sind owes a debt to me and I have claims. We are today living in strange circumstances and it is sad that Sind is betraying the country. Sind may have Hindu-Muslim frictions, but you must realize that you are being duped by the glitter being shown to you. Office is sure to entangle us and we must rise above this. Urgency of time requires that we should rise above this. Otherwise, it will be betrayal of the country if we succumbed. Every Indian should be aware of

the present political situation in the country so that he might not be duped into the temptation of office and won over.

Sind is playing into the hands of the powers that be in as much as every M.L.A. appears to hanker after jobs. Evidently the right people are not there."

April 1937

72 IN DEFENCE OF THE WORKERS ON STRIKE

IT HAS DEEPLY grieved me to learn of the suffering of hundreds of thousands of jute workers who have struck work since February last. This is causing misery not only to the workers themselves but also to their women and children. The demands for higher wages and for more humane conditions of work are just and reasonable. In every democratic country of the West, the Government looks after the welfare of the people. May we not expect that the Ministers under the new constitution would take-up this question affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers and their families immediately and see that justice is done to them? Humanity demands that those who bear the burden of the society should be protected and looked after by the society itself. To give this strike a communal turn by stirring up ugly communal passions should be condemned by every right-thinking man.

I appeal to my countrymen to help the jute-workers and their helpless women and children in this period of their suffering and distress.

29 April 1937

73 ON INDIA

I LOVE INDIA, not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography, not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great sons—*Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma,* Brahma is truth, Brahma is wisdom, Brahma is infinite; *Santam, Sivam, Advaitam,* peace is in Brahma, goodness in Brahma, and the unity of all beings.

Brahma-nishtho grhasthah syat tatvajnana-prakurvita
yad yad karma prakurvita tad Brahmani samarpayet

The householder shall have his life established in Brahma, shall pursue

the deeper truth of all things and in all activities of life dedicate his works to the Eternal Being.

Thus we have come to know that what India truly seeks is not a peace which is in negation, or in some mechanical adjustment, but that which is in *Sivam*, in goodness; which is in *Advaitam*, in the truth of perfect union; that India does not enjoin her children to cease from *karma*, but to perform their *karma*, in the presence of the Eternal, with the pure knowledge of the spiritual meaning of existence; that this is the true prayer of Mother India;

Ya eko-varno bahudha saktiyogat varnan anekan nihitartho dadhati
vichaiti chante visvamadau sa no buddhya subhaya samyunaktu

He who is one, who is above all colour distinctions, who dispenses the inherent needs of men of all colours, who comprehends all things from their beginning to the end, let Him unite us to one another with the wisdom which is the wisdom of goodness.

1937

74 APPEAL FOR ANDAMAN PRISONERS

On the continent of Europe they have their Devil's Island, (French Penal Settlement), their Lipari (Italian Penal Settlement), their Concentration Camps (in Germany and Russia) and other specially built halls for the primitive exhibition of humanity, but in England they have no such unhallowed places for the intensification of suffering by wrenching away prisoners from their own soil. When to our dismay, we find that an infringement of their own rule has been made possible exclusively for the subject races, the insult of their distinction humiliate all of us, and I offer my protest in the name of my country.

It is more than a week since about 200 political prisoners have gone on hunger-strike in the Andamans. The news of the hunger-strike was withheld from us for a long time. This callous indifference to public sentiment is a sad reminder of our national helplessness. In England or in any other democratic country government would not dare keep a fact of such national importance as this hunger-strike secret for such a long time.

The political prisoners have demanded repatriation to India from the Andamans. Their demand is just and modest. When the power is not responsible to the people of this country, it is only natural that the people will be apprehensive of the treatment that is meted out to political prisoners exiled in an island thousands of miles away from India and demand that these political prisoners should be kept in India where at least some kind of popular control can be exercised to soften the inhuman rigour of prison life in India.

It appears that the Government of India have shifted their own responsibilities regarding the question of repatriation of the Andaman prisoners on to the shoulders of the Bengal Government. Moreover, the Government of India have rejected the petition of the political prisoners on the plea of their inability to consider the collective petition of all prisoners.

Once again the heartless inflexibility of the Government machinery has triumphed over its sense of humanity and justice.

In those Provinces of India where the representatives of the people have taken up the reins of administration, political prisoners have been unconditionally released and all encroachment on the civil liberty of the people has been removed.

It is only in the Province of Bengal that hundreds of boys are detained without trial. The Press is now and then gagged to remind us of the power that is not answerable to the will of the people of this country, and the civil liberty that the people of Bengal enjoy has become as unreal as a mirage in the desert.

We all know that once before in the past during another hunger-strike amongst the political prisoners in the Andamans, three young lives were lost. Two of them were the direct victims of the cruel system of forced feeding. Shall we and the Bengal Government allow the same tragedy to occur in a larger number this time once again?

I appeal to the Bengal Government to line up with the Governments of Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces and to treat with broad-minded sympathy and humanity the case of political prisoners and detenus.

The pitiless method of punishment that still persists in most parts of the world in their penal system is enough to condemn human civilization, but of late an aggravated spirit of vindictiveness has suddenly grown in virulence in some of the Western countries in their dealings with political victims. India has not altogether escaped in her government from manifesting in some degree such Fascistic infection which has scant respect for the law and for the legitimate claim of human freedom.

And, the gloom of despair has spread from hundreds of stricken homes over this unfortunate province when men and women of tender age and made to suffer an indefinite period of detention without trial, undergoing various modes of penalty, physical and psychological.

On this present occasion I am requested by my countrymen to lend my voice in asking our rulers, not for any radical change in the administration of the law, which, no doubt is sorely needed but for some mitigation in its severity.

3 August 1937

(Personal and Confidential)

DEAR SIR JOHN ANDERSON,

I feel greatly relieved to learn from Dr. Amiya Chakravorty, who had an interview with you on the 14th inst., that you and your Government are taking the earliest opportunity of bringing about a satisfactory settlement with regard

to the Andaman prisoners. It is needless to emphasize that the matter is fraught with grave consequences and I am afraid, if no generous gesture is forthcoming from the Government, the situation might be too embittered for ever restoring a normal atmosphere in the Province. I have sent just now the following cable to the prisoners:

Earnestly Appeal To You To Call Off Hunger Strike (Stop) Your Case Taken Up By The Whole Nation (Stop) Feel Restoration Of Atmosphere Favourable For Discussion Will Be Greatly Helpful.

And I am also writing to Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru, whose words would have great consideration with the prisoners to issue similar appeal to them. I quite realize that the calling off of the fast would considerably lessen the tension in the country and restore an atmosphere more suitable for a dispassionate discussion. I have every hope that our request would be honoured by the prisoners and the Government will also generously review the whole situation.

Dr. Chakravorty tells me that a scheme of repatriation has been already accepted by the Government and that you are also considering the question of release of detenus. I feel very strongly on these matters on humanitarian grounds and we should like Great Britain to take the lead in abolishing the system of maintaining penal settlements for political prisoners, entirely cut-off from humanising contacts with society and we trust that in India the reform of prisons will follow the advanced technique now being adopted by a modern country.

16 August 1937

75 IN RESPONSE TO RASBEHARI BOSE'S APPEAL

'WHO AM I TO RECALL SUCH RIGHTEOUS PROTEST'

Dear Rasbehari,

Your cable has caused me many restless hours. For, it hurts me very much to have to ignore your appeal. I wish you had asked for my co-operation in a cause against which my spirit did not protest. I know in making this appeal you counted on my great regard for the Japanese, for I along with the rest of Asia did once admire and look up to Japan and did once fondly hope that in Japan Asia had at last discovered its challenge to the West, that Japan's new strength would be consecrated in safeguarding the culture of the East against alien interests, but Japan has not taken long to betray that rising hope and repudiate all that seemed significant in her wonderful and to us symbolic awakening and has now become itself a worse menace to the defenceless peoples of the East.

Worst than its economic exploitation, worse indeed than its geographical aggression, is this daily perpetration of pitiless massacres and its unashamed

championship of its inhumanity. Countries have been conquered before in history and seen in wider perspective. There is nothing very inhuman or shocking in a virile race overstepping the dilapidated fences built by the previous victories of an earlier race and until science had made man's inhumanity so effective, such fighting like all life seemed only half cruel, all that is changed and today when one nation invades another its wrong is not only that of mere imperialist ambition but of human butchery more indiscriminate than any plague and if one outraged conscience all over the world cries out against such a wrong, who am I to recall such righteous protest.

This protest has not been engineered by any single individual. It is as spontaneous and heartfelt as the admiration that the peoples of the East felt for Japan thirty years ago I should be powerless to check it even if I dared to attempt it. You must, therefore, forgive me that I am unable to oblige you and believe me when I say that I have great sympathy with my countrymen in Japan as indeed I have with the Japanese themselves, but the cry that comes from China of broken hearts and heads and broken bones is far too piercing and awful.

11 October 1937

76 VANDE MATARAM

An unfortunate controversy is raging round the question of the suitability of Vande Mataram as national song. In offering my own opinion about it, I am reminded that the privilege of originally setting its first stanza to the tune was mine, when the author was still alive, and that I was the first person to sing it before a gathering at an early session of the Calcutta Congress.

To me, the spirit of tenderness and devotion expressed in its first portion and the emphasis it gave to the beautiful and beneficent aspects of our Motherland made a special appeal, so much so that I found no difficulty in dissociating it from the rest of the poem and from those portions of the book of which it is part, with all the sentiments of which, brought up as I was in this monotheistic ideals of my father, I could have no sympathy.

It first caught on as an appropriate National Anthem at the poignant period of our strenuous struggle for asserting the people's will against the decree of separation hurled upon our province by the ruling power. Subsequent developments, during which Vande Mataram became a national slogan, cannot, in view of the stupendous sacrifices of some of the best of our youths, be likely ignored at a moment, when it has once again become necessary to give expression to our triumphant confidence in the victory of our cause.

I freely concede that the whole of Bankim's Vande Mataram poem, read together with its context, is liable to be interpreted in ways that might wound

Muslim susceptibilities but a national song, though derived from it, which has spontaneously come to consist only of the first two stanzas of the original poem and need not remind us every time of the whole of it, much less of the story with which it was accidentally associated. It has acquired a separate individuality and an inspiring significance of its own, in which I see nothing to offend any sect or community.

30 October 1937

77 APPEAL TO JOURNALISTS

IN THIS MOST critical period of the history of our province, when problems of tremendous difficulty are loudly challenging us, I earnestly appeal to the editors of our journals to be extremely careful in avoiding the temptation of constantly giving exaggerated emphasis to popular weaknesses—those that work against the binding force in the fruit-bearing soil of our national being.

Innumerable channels of self depreciation, along which we are carrying on our daily traffic in mutual revilement, are creating deeper mischief in the internal constitution of our body-politic than the manoeuvring of those outsiders who pile up a world-opinion against us with the dexterous use of half-truths and facts distorted into a caricature.

Evidently, the more we are being pushed through a combination of evil forces into the background from all places of honour, the more virulent is becoming the fury of mutual debasement in Bengal, where the demand for the stinking stuff of calumny is copiously met with, not only through the puny publications of the poisonous mushroom type, but often journals belonging to a higher distinction. Under their constant fusillade of vilifications, and their underground mining operations institutions split up in factions, and reputations are light-heartedly dragged in the mud. In almost every department of life an exhibition is going on in Bengal of the unhealthy instinct that encourages malignant pleasure in discrediting all persons and pursuits that have reached any degree of prominence, headless of the fact that by doing it we discredit our own country before the world; that by dimming the lighted spots in our society through the smoke-screen of slander, we only prove the innate obscurity of our own nation's mind.

This is the reason why Bengal though rich in imagination and intelligence is woefully deficient in institutions that could only be based upon mutual trust and co-operation and on an unfaltering loyalty to a common cause. These symptoms are specially to be dreaded when some amount of responsibility is placed in our hands for guiding our political destiny,—the responsibility which will depend for its fulfilment upon 'Sweetness and light', upon the magnanimity of heart and on a strict adherence to truth, justice and forbearance of spirit.

25 December 1937

78 JAGADISH CHANDRA BOSE

I

YEARS AGO, when Jagadish Chandra, in his militant exuberance of youthfulness, was contemptuously defying all obstacles to the progress of his endeavour, I came into intimate contact with him, and became infected with his vigorous hopefulness. There was every chance of his frightening me away into a respectful distance, making me aware of the airy nothingness of my own imaginings. But to my relief, I found in him a dreamer, and it seemed to me, what surely was a half-truth, that it was more his magical instinct than the probing of his reason which startled out secrets of nature before sudden flashes of his imagination. In this I felt our mutual affinity but at the same time our difference, for to my mind he appeared to be the poet of the world of facts that waited to be proved by the scientist for their final triumph, whereas my own world of visions had their value not in their absolute probability, but in their significance of delightfulness. All the same, I believe that a part of my nature is logical which not only enjoys making playthings of facts, but seeks pleasure in an analytical view of objective reality. I remember often having been assured by my friend that I only lacked the opportunity of training to be a scientist but not the temperament. Thus in the prime of my youth I was strangely attracted by the personality of this remarkable man and found his mind sensitively alert in the poetical atmosphere of enjoyment which belonged to me.

At this time he was busy detecting in the behaviour of the non-living some hidden impulses of life. This aroused a keen enthusiasm in me who had ever been familiar with the utterance of the Upanishad which proclaims that whatever there is in this moving world vibrates with life. Afterwards he shifted his enquiries from the field of physics to the biological realm of plants. With the marvellously sensitive instruments which he invented he magnified the inaudible whisperings of vegetable life, which seemed to him somewhat similar in language to the message of our own nerves. My mind was overcome with joy at the idea of the unity of the heart-beats of the universe, and I felt sure that the pulsating light which palpitates in the stars has its electric kinship in the life that throbs in my own veins. I knew that this was not science, but my mind trembled with the hope that the opening message had already been declared and final evidences were in preparation.

At last when Jagadish Chandra sailed across the sea to place the results of his researches before the questioning scrutiny of the West, my heart expanded with an undoubting expectation of our country's claim to a world-recognition being accepted and at the prospect of a wide establishment of a wonderful truth which is native to our oriental attitude of mind. With what little lay in my power I helped him in his adventure but, fortunately, since then no more help was needed either in companionship or in other ways from a man like me who was too heavily burdened with his own responsibilities. His

fame spread rapidly and material contributions from all sides showered upon his schemes, which centralized at last in the Bose Institute. I fervently hope that the Spirit of Science will find its lasting shrine in this place and the aspiration of the great master will remain a living force in its heart, making it a perpetual memorial worthy of him.

This tribute of mine to the memory of Jagadish will appear inadequately feeble, especially in contrast to the repeated magnification of his name in my writings both in prose and verse at the time when his fame was not luminously apparent above the horizon and when, I am sure, my fellowship and unfaltering faith in his genius did hearten and help him. But my struggling health, which has lately been wrenched back from the grip of death, is incompetent for most of my important tasks and also the singing hope that began its first soaring in immensity has completed its journey in its terminus.

1937

II

WHEN BY SOME fortunate chance I came into an intimate contact with Sir Jagadish, he was in the prime of his youth and I was very nearly of his age. At that moment his mind seemed entranced with a vision of the living creatures' fundamental kinship with the world of the unconscious. He was busy in employing his marvellous inventiveness in coaxing mute Nature to yield her hidden language. The response which he received through skilful questioning revealed to him glimpses of the mystery of an existence that concealed its meaning underneath a contradiction of its appearance. I had the rare privilege of sharing the daily delight of his constant surprises. I believe, poets inherit the primeval age in their temperament when things in their infant simplicity revealed a common feature. Somehow these lovers of *Maya* feel the joy of their being spread all over the creation, which makes them indulge in seeking the analogy of the living in things that appear lifeless. Such an attitude of mind may not in all cases be based upon any definite belief, animistic or pantheistic; it may be merely a make-believe, as we notice in children's play, which owes its origin to the lurking tendency in our subconscious mind to ascribe life-energy to all activities in the natural world. I was made familiar from my boyhood with the Upanishad which, in its primitive intuition, proclaims that whatever there is in this world vibrates with life, the life that is one in the infinite.

This might have been the reason of the eager enthusiasm with which I expected that the idea of the boundless community of life in the world was on the verge of a final sanction from the logic of scientific verification. Being allowed to follow the Master's footsteps in the privacy of his pursuit, even though as a mere picker of his casual hints, I had my daily feast of wonders. At this early stage of his adventure when obstacles were powerfully numerous and jealousy largely predominated over appreciation, friendly companionship and sympathy must have had some needful value for him even one who to maintain intellectual communion with him lacked special competency. Yet I

can proudly claim to have helped him in some of his immediate needs and occasional hours of despondency in those days of an inadequate recognition and feeble support that he received from the public.

In the background of that distant memory of mine, I find not the slightest gleam of a vision of the enormous success that could before long combine scientific renown with a vast material means adequate enough to build this Institute, one of the very few richly endowed mediums in India for bestowing the benediction of science upon his countrymen. In fact, it makes me laugh at myself today to read, in some of my old letters, my effort to encourage him with the likelihood of filling the gaps in his funds when my own resources were precariously limited to persuading friends who were foolish enough to have faith in me. Still it is comically sweet to think of the proud magnificence in my assurance fitfully accompanied by contribution absurdly poor compared to the ceaseless flow of tribute that, later on, he could attract by his own magnetic personality and also by the general confidence he widely aroused in his genius. But I repeat again, it was sweet to have dreamed impracticable dreams and to have done however little it was possible, as it proves a courage of joy in the faith in greatness which itself is a bounteous gift to one's own mind.

However ill-equipped as I was by the deficiency in my training and by the poet's idiosyncrasy to be a fit companion to a man of science at a luminous period of his self-revelation, I was still accepted as his close friend and, possibly because of the contrariety in our natural vocations, I was able to offer some stimulation to his urge of fulfilment. Not having the necessary amount of vanity in my constitution, it had been the subject of constant wonder in my mind.

Since then time passed quickly, maturing the fruits of our expectation. During this period of his fast-growing triumph, I was modest enough to feel less and less the urgency of my comradeship in his journey towards the goal, which was no longer arduous or beset with uncertainty. And yet I can rightfully claim the credit for strengthening in some measure his trust in his own destiny, by adding to it my own unwavering faith, at that painfully hesitant moment of fortune during the dubious dawn of his career, when even persons of meagre resources might have some important use.

Victory is the inalienable claim of all genuine power having the might of attraction that naturally exploits all kindred elements on its path and moulds them into an image of glory. And such an image is this Institute, which represents the Master's lifelong endeavour taking a permanent shape in the form of a centre for the inspiration of similar endeavours.

However, the early association of mine with the Master's first great challenge of genius to his fate, whose path at that time did not run smooth, belongs for me to a remote period of a history in which I feel myself hazily indistinct. And this made me seriously waver to accept the invitation for taking an honoured seat at a ceremonial meeting in this institution. The presumptuousness of youth made me absurdly proud to imagine that my companionship was growing into an organic part in the history that was being evolved before my eyes, and, in that belief I did try to hearten the hero, which was a

part of my vanity. But foolish youth does not last for ever, and I have had time to come to realize my limitation. Anyhow it is quite obvious, that I am a mere poet carrying on my *sadhana* in the temple of language, the most capricious deity who is apt to ignore her responsibility to logic, often losing herself in the nebulous region of fantasy. Our oriental custom is to bring proper gifts to sacred shrines, but my gift of words for this occasion cannot but be out of place among the records of memorable proceedings of a learned society.

Fortunately there are some few men among us who can claim fellowship with the aristocracy in the realm of science, and can be expected to make splendid this ceremony with the wealth of their thoughts. I can only bless this institution from that obscure distance where the multitude of the uncared-for generations of this country have helplessly drifted to the pitiless toil of primitive land-tilling. I offer my salutation to the illustrious founder of this Institute, humbly sitting by those who are deprived of a sufficiency of that knowledge which only can save them from the desolating menace of scientific devilry and from the continual drainage of the resources of life, and I appeal to this Institute to bring our call to science herself to rescue the world from the clutches of the marauders who betray her noble mission into an unmitigated savagery.

1937

79 THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION IN INDIA

To The Editor of the Manchester Guardian
SIR,

My English friends have done me the honour of inviting my opinion on what, for want of a better term, is being called the "New Constitution for India." Let me first of all make clear that an entire misapprehension is widely prevalent in the West which presupposes that the federation, now about to be imposed at the centre, will represent something not very far short of complete autonomy. Japan has been making wide use of that word in China. Let us hope that Englishmen will not be content to follow her example by employing it in India in a similar manner.

For let me ask the simple and obvious question: How can a country have autonomy whose people are for the most part disarmed, deprived of control over four-fifths of their national purse, and allowed to have nothing to do with their own external affairs? I am sure the British would despise themselves if they had to tolerate even any distant analogy of this, or some caricature of freedom offered by niggardly benevolence, in their own homes.

But our rulers are likely to protest that they have nothing but pity and love

for us, and that they are painfully enduring the extra burden of governing us only to discharge their sacred duty by maintaining law and order. If some of us are impudent enough to refer them to the balance-sheet of their extended rule and point out that it discloses an unbroken continuity of poverty, ignorance, enfeebled life-force, with a stead deterioration in the value of our human capital, we are likely to be severely reprimanded. Yet it is not at all difficult for anybody to calculate the amount of positive benefit conferred upon us by our Government if he takes care to study the amount of expenditure allotted to education, sanitation, and economic improvement compared with the population of India and then examines its parallel in Japan.

I want to tell the British people quite plainly: So long as you hold us in your grip, you can never have either our trust or our friendship. We know that, in your own homes, you have many kindly virtues and are admirable for your sense of fair play and human justice. Perhaps for that very reason you find it difficult to understand how the same English people out here can betray your best traditions. But then you have to remember that possession of empire always corrupts, and it has corrupted you.

I am sure that the sensitive minds among you are already feeling that you have gained your Imperial prestige at too heavy a price, that the greatness of the end you have achieved is being fast destroyed by the Nemesis you have provoked in violating the best part of your nature while achieving it. And I believe you realize that the burden of surfeited Empire has dragged you down to that degree of weakness which makes you too timid to be ready adequately to deal with miscreant nations that are defiantly marching against political decency and your own interest and dignity. Those thoughtful and brave individuals among you who are eager to disown the precarious prestige of an Empire founded upon force, are yet far too few in number and their resources are too meagre to retard effectively the gathering impetus of the blind rush of power to a self-destructive end.

If you ask my personal opinion, I hardly imagine that catastrophe can now be avoided, since the only event in which all the powers of Europe are engaged with furious and frenzied zeal seems to be that of paving the path for mutual annihilation. Yet in spite of this I have the hope that misfortune and suffering, if they became inevitable, will not exceed that limits of retribution and bring about a collapse of the entire European civilization; for there is much in that civilization that is noble and worthy of being cherished. But Fate itself works in blind fits and starts, and one never knows where the Nemesis will lead, if we keep on provoking it. Our own fate in India is still linked up with yours, and though the downfall of your Imperial structure may mean a release of our people from its helpless dependence there are great aspirations and hopes which we share in common with many noble spirits in your own land and long to see fulfilled. They and we stand united against the deadening and unreasoning elements among your own people as well as amongst ours. It is not that the Indian people stand sworn to enmity against the British People, but that awakened India in common with awakened Britain is opposed to

those blind and sinister powers which are traitors to both.

As regards the new Constitution, it is really not worth troubling about as it stands. It was made by politicians and bureaucrats, who, even as they were framing it were sending some of our best men and women to prison, mainly without trial. It therefore embodies all their narrow caution and miserly mistrust.

No! It is not through such an artificial structure that any final good can come to us. The future lies in our learning to ally ourselves with those humane forces in the world, wherever found, which are seeking to end altogether the exploitation of man by man and nation by nation.—Yours, etc.

28 February 1938

80 TO THE PEOPLE OF CHINA

I

YOUR NEIGHBOURING nation which is largely indebted to you for the gift of your cultural wealth and therefore should naturally cultivate your comradeship for its own ultimate benefit, has suddenly developed a virulent infection of imperialistic rapacity imported from the West and turned the great chance of building the bulwark of a noble destiny in the East into a dismal disaster. Its loud bluster of power, its ruthless orgy of indiscriminate massacre of life, demolition of education centres, its callous defiance of all civilized codes of humanity has brought humiliation upon the modern spirit of Asia that is struggling to find its honoured place in the fore-front of modern age. It is all the more unfortunate because some of the proud powers of the west, tottering under the burden of their bloated property, are timidly condoning the blood-sodden politics of the standard-bearers of their own highly reputed civilization, humbly bending their knees at the altar of indecent success that has blasted some time-honoured citadel of sacred human rights.

At this desperate age of moral upset it is only natural for us to hope that the continent which has produced the two greatest men, Buddha and Christ, in the whole course of human events, must still fulfil its responsibility to maintain the purest expression of character in the teeth of the scientific effrontery of the evil genius of man. Has not that expectation already shown its first luminous streak of fulfilment in the person of Gandhi in a historical horizon obscured by centuries of indignity? However, Japan has cynically refused its own great possibility, its noble heritage of 'bushido' and has offered a most painful disillusionment to us in an unholy adventure through which even some apparent success of hers is sure to bend down to the dust, loaded with a fatal burden of failure.

Our only consolation lies in the hope that the deliberate aggression of

violence that has assailed your country will bear a sublime meaning in the heroic suffering it causes in a promise of the birth of a new soul of the nation. You are the only great people in the world who never had the snobbishness of extolling the military power as one of the glorious characteristics of national spirit, and when the same brute force of militarism with its hideous efficiency has overtaken your country we pray with all our heart that you may come out of this trial once again to be able to justify your trust in the true heroism of higher humanity in this cowardly world ready to prove traitor to its own best ideals. Even if a mere physical success be immediately missed by you yet your moral gain will never be lost and the seeds of victory that are being sown through this terrible struggle in the depth of your being will over and over again prove their deathlessness.

July 1938

II

DEAR FRIEND,

China is great. Every day you are proving it at the cost of an incredible suffering and sacrifice. The heroism your people are displaying is epic in quality. I feel sure whatever may happen your victory will ever remain resplendent in the moral field of human endeavour.

26 December 1939

81 'FASCISM' OF THE STATE OF TRAVANCORE

ALONG WITH THE whole country I have felt grievously hurt that an enlightened Indian state like Travancore should have initiated a regime of fascism with its echnique of shooting, denial of elementary of rights of freedom and a leliberate denial of elementary rights of freedom and a deliberate persecuion of the Congressmen. Whatever the provocation or the nature of dispute, he methods that have been pursued to exert authority are without justificaion. At a time when India is moving towards a new era of freedom it is essential hat the state should feel a sense of responsibility for giving shape to a humane ivilization and not prove their unfitness by allying themselves with forces that hreaten the existence of civilized society.

[October 1938]

82 LETTERS TO CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

I

DEAR FRIEND,

I feel so keenly about the suffering of your people as if I was one of them. For what has happened in your country is not a mere local misfortune which may at the best claim our sympathy, it is a tragic revelation that the destiny of all those principles of humanity for which the peoples of the West turned martyrs for three centuries rests in the hands of cowardly guardians who are selling it to save their own skins. It turns one cynical to see the democratic peoples betraying their kind when even the bullies stand by each other.

I feel so humiliated and so helpless when I contemplate all this, humiliated to see all the values, which have given whatever worth modern civilization has, betrayed one by one, and helpless that we are powerless to prevent it. Our country is itself a victim of these wrongs. My words have no power to stay the onslaught of the maniacs, nor even the power to arrest the desertion of those who erstwhile pretended to be the saviours of humanity. I can only remind those who are not yet wholly demented that when men turn beasts they sooner or later tear each other.

As for your own country, I can only hope that though abandoned and robbed, it will maintain its native integrity and falling back upon its own inalienable resources will recreate a richer national life than before.

I am sending you a copy of my English rendering of a recent poem of mine, yet unpublished, in which my outraged sentiment has found its expression. You may use it as you like, though it will also be published in the November issue of the *Visvabharati Quarterly*. If you like I can also send you the Bengali original.

With best wishes and kind regards.

15 October 1938

II

BETRAYAL OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

MY DEAR LESNY,

It was sad to read in your letter all the news about the great betrayal of your magnificent people at the hands of England and France. I met Mr. Nehru a few days back. He was in Central Europe at the time of the tragic happenings and he gave me a graphic description of the woes of the mutilation of Czechoslovakia. But it is there and you have but to submit to destiny. Let me only hope, your brave people will not lose heart and you will not fail to rebuild once again your own future.

14 February 1939

83 TAGORE AND NOGUCHI

41 Sakurrayama, Nakano, Tokyo
July 23, 1938

DEAR RABINDRANATH

When I visited you at Shantiniketan a few years ago, you were troubled with the Ethiopian question, and vehemently condemned Italy. Retiring into your guest chamber that night, I wondered whether you would say the same thing on Japan, if she were equally situated like Italy. I perfectly agreed with your opinion and admired your courage of speaking, when in Tokyo, 1916, you censured the westernization of Japan from a public platform. Not answering back to your words, the intellectual people of my country were conscious of its possible consequence, for, not only staying as an unpleasant spectacle, the westernization had every chance for becoming anything awful.

But if you take the present war in China for the criminal outcome of Japan's surrender to the West, you are wrong, because, not being a slaughtering madness, it is, I believe, the inevitable means, terrible it is though, for establishing a new great world in the Asiatic continent, where the "principle of live-and-let-live" has to be realized. Believe me, it is the war of "Asia for Asia." With a crusader's determination and with a sense of sacrifice that belongs to a martyr, our young soldiers go to the front. Their minds are light and happy, the war is not for conquest, but the correction of mistaken idea of China, I mean Kuomingtung government, and for uplifting her simple and ignorant masses to better life and wisdom. Borrowing from other countries neither money nor blood, Japan is undertaking this tremendous work single-handed and alone. I do not know why we cannot be praised by your countrymen. But we are terribly blamed by them, as it seems, for our heroism and aim.

Sometime ago the Chinese army defeated in Huntung province by Hwangho River, had cut from desperate madness several places of the river bank; not keeping in check the advancing Japanese army, it only made thirty hundred thousand people drown in the flood and one hundred thousand village houses destroyed. Defending the welfare of its own kinsmen or killing them,—which is the object of the Chinese army, I wonder? It is strange that such an atrocious inhuman conduct ever known in the world history did not become in the West a target of condemnation. Oh where are your humanitarians who profess to be a guardian of humanity? Are they deaf and blind? Besides the Chinese soldiers, miserably paid and poorly clothed, are a habitual criminal of robbery, and then an everlasting menace to the honest hard-working people who cling to the ground. Therefore the Japanese soldiers are followed by them with the paper flags of the Rising Sun in their hands; to a soldierly work we have to add one more endeavour in the relief work of them. You can imagine how expensive is this war for Japan. Putting expenditure out of the question, we are determined to use up our last cent for the final victory that would ensure in the future a great peace of many hundred years.

I received the other day a letter from my western friend, denouncing the world that went to Hell. I replied him, saying: "Oh my friend, you should cover your ears, when a war bugle rings too wild. Shut your eyes against a picture of your martial cousins becoming a fish salad! Be patient my friend, for a war is only spasmodic matter that cannot last long, but will adjust one's condition better in the end. You are a coward if you are afraid of it. Nothing worthy will be done unless you pass through a severe trial. And the peace that follows after a war is most important." For the peace we Japanese are ready to exhaust our resources of money and blood.

Today we are called under the flag of "Service-making," each person of the country doing his own bit for the realization of idealism. There was no time as today in the whole history of Japan, when all the people, from the Emperor to a rag-picker in the street, consolidated together with one mind. And there is no more foolish supposition as that our financial bankruptcy is a thing settled if the war drags on. Since the best part of the Chinese continent is already with us in friendly terms, we are not fighting with the whole of China. Our enemy is only the Kuomingtung government, a miserable puppet of the West. If Chiang Kai-shek wishes a long war, we are quite ready for it. Five years? Ten years? Twenty years? As long as he desires, my friend. Now one year has passed since the first bullet was exchanged between China and Japan; but with a fresh mind as if it sees that the war has just begun, we are now looking the event in the face. After the fall of Hankow, the Kuomingtung government will retire to a remote place of her country; but until the western countries change their attitude towards China, we will keep up fighting with fists or wisdom.

The Japanese poverty is widely advertised in the West, though I do not know how it was started. Japan is poor beyond doubt,—well, according to the measure you wish to apply to. But I think that the Japanese poverty is a fabricated story as much as richness of China. There is no country in the world like Japan, where money is equally divided among the people. Supposing that we are poor, I will say that we are trained to stand the pain of poverty. Japan is very strong in adversity.

But you will be surprised to know that the postal saving of people comes up now to five thousand million *yen*, responding to the government's propaganda of economy. For going on, surmounting every difficulty that the war brings in, we are saving every cent and even making good use of waste scraps. Since the war began, we grew spiritually strong and true ten times more than before. There is nothing hard to accomplish to a young man. Yes, Japan is the land of young men. According to nature's law, the old has to retire while the young advances. Behold, the sun is arising, be gone all the sickly bats and dirty vermins! Cursed be one's intrigue and empty pride that sin against nature's rule and justice.

China could very well avoid the war, of course, if Chiang Kai-shek was more sensible with insight. Listening to an irresponsible third party of the west a long way off, thinking too highly of his own strength, he turned at last his own country, as she is today, into a ruined desert to which fifty years would not be

enough for recovery. He never happened to think for a moment that the friendship of western countries was but a trick of their monetary interest itself in his country. And it is too late now for Chiang to reproach them for the faithlessness of their words of promise.

For a long time we had been watching with doubt at Chiang's program, the consolidation of the country, because the Chinese history had no period when the country was unified in the real meaning, and the subjugation of various war-lords under his flag was nothing. Until all the people took an oath of co-operation with him, we thought, his program was no more than a table talk. Being hasty and thoughtless, Chiang began to popularize the anti-Japanese movement among the students who were pigmy politicians in some meaning because he deemed it to be a method for the speedy realization of his program; but he never thought that he was erring from the Oriental ethics that preached on one's friendship with the neighbours. Seeing that his propagation had too great effect on his young followers, he had no way to keep in check their wild jingoism, and then finally made his country roll down along the slope of destruction. Chiang is a living example who sold his country to the west for nothing, and smashed his skin with the crime of westernization. Dear Rabindranath, what will you say about this Chiang Kai-shek?

Dear poet, today we have to turn our deaf ears towards a lesson of freedom that may come from America, because the people there already ceased to practice it. The ledger-book diplomacy of England is too well known through the world. I am old enough to know from experience that no man is better than others, while one country being no more worse than others. Though I admit that Japan is today ruled by militarism, natural to the actual condition of the country, I am glad that enough freedom of speaking and acting is allowed to one like myself. Japan is fairly liberal in spite of the war time. So I can say without fear to be looked up that those service-crazy people are drunken, and that a thing in the world, great and true, because of its connection with the future, only comes from one who hates to be a common human unit, stepping aside so that he can unite himself with Eternity. I believe that such a one who withdraws into a snail's shell for the quest of life's hopeful future, will be in the end be a true patriot, worthy of his own nation. Therefore I am able not to disagree the name of poet, and to try to live up to the words of Browning who made the Grammarian exclaim:

"Leave Now for dogs and apes! Man has Forever."

Yours very sincerely,
YONE NOGUCHI

Uttarayan, Santiniketan, Bengal
September 1, 1938

DEAR NOGUCHI,

I am profoundly surprised by the letter that you have written to me neither its temper nor its contents harmonise with the spirit of Japan which I learnt to admire in your writings and came to love through my personal

contacts with you. It is sad to think that the passion of collective militarism may on occasion helplessly overwhelm even the creative artist, that genuine intellectual power should be led to offer its dignity and truth to be sacrificed at the shrine of the dark gods of war.

You seem to agree with me in your condemnation of the massacre of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy but you would reserve the murderous attack on Chinese millions for judgment under a different category. But surely judgements are based on principle, and no amount of special pleading can change the fact that in launching a ravening war on Chinese humanity, with all the deadly methods learnt from the West, Japan is infringing every moral principle on which civilization is based. You claim that Japan's situation was unique, forgetting that military situations are always unique, and that pious war-lords, convinced of peculiarly individual justification for their atrocities have never failed to arrange for special alliances with divinity for annihilation and torture on a large scale.

Humanity, in spite of its many failures, has believed in a fundamental moral structure of society. When you speak, therefore, of "the inevitable means, terrible it is though, for establishing a new great world in the Asiatic continent"—signifying, I suppose, the bombing on Chinese women and children and the desecration of ancient temples and Universities as a means of saving China for Asia—you are ascribing to humanity a way of life which is not even inevitable among the animals and would certainly not apply to the East, in spite of her occasional aberrations. You are building your conception of an Asia which would be raised on a tower of skulls. I have, as you rightly point out, believed in the message of Asia, but I never dreamt that this message could be identified with deeds which brought exaltation to the heart of Tamer Lane at his terrible efficiency in manslaughter. When I protested against "Westernisation" in my lectures in Japan, I contrasted the rapacious Imperialism which some of the *Nations* of Europe were cultivating with the ideal of perfection preached by Buddha and Christ, with the great heritage of culture and good neighbourliness that went to the making of Asiatic and other civilizations. I felt it to be my duty to warn the land of Bushido, of great Art and traditions of noble heroism, that this phase of scientific savagery which victimised Western humanity and had led their helpless masses to a moral cannibalism was never to be imitated by a virile people who had entered upon a glorious renascence and had every promise of a creative future before them. The doctrine of "Asia for Asia" which you enunciate in your letter, as an instrument of political blackmail, has all the virtues of the lesser Europe which I repudiate and nothing of the larger humanity that makes us one across the barriers of political labels and divisions. I was amused to read the recent statement of a Tokyo politician that the military alliance of Japan with Italy and Germany was made for "highly spiritual and moral reasons" and "had no materialistic considerations behind them". Quite so. What is not amusing is that artists and thinkers should echo such remarkable sentiments that translate military swagger into spiritual bravado. In the West, even in the critical days

of war-madness, there is never any dearth of great spirits who can raise their voice above the din of battle and defy their ours war-mongers in the name of humanity. Such men have suffered, but never betrayed the conscience of their peoples which they represented. Asia will not be westernised if she can learn from such men: I still believe that there are such souls in Japan though we do not hear of them in those newspapers that are compelled at the cost of their extinction to reproduce their military master's voice.

"The betrayal of intellectuals" of which the great French writer spoke after the European war, is a dangerous symptom of our Age. You speak of the savings of the poor people of Japan, their silent sacrifice and suffering and take pride in betraying that this pathetic sacrifice is being exploited for gun running and invasion of a neighbour's hearth and home, that human wealth of greatness is pillaged for inhuman purposes. Propaganda, I know, has been reduced to a fine art, and it is almost impossible for people in non-democratic countries to resist hourly doses of poison, but one had imagined that at least the men of intellect and imagination would themselves retain their gift of independent judgement. Evidently such is not always the case; behind sophisticated arguments seem to lie a mentality of perverted nationalism which makes the "intellectuals" of today go blustering about their "ideologies" dragooning their own "masses" into paths of dissolution. I have known your people and I hate to believe that they could deliberately participate in the organized drugging of Chinese men and women by opium and heroin, but they do not know; in the meanwhile, representatives of Japanese culture in China are busy practising their craft on the multitudes caught in the grip of an organization of a wholesale human pollution. Proofs of such forcible drugging in Manchukuo and China have been adduced by unimpeachable authorities. But from Japan there has come no protest, not even from her poets.

Holding such opinions as many of your intellectuals do, I am not surprised that they are left "free" by your Government to express themselves. I hope they enjoy their freedom. Retiring from such freedom into "a snail's shell" in order to savour the bliss of meditation "on life's hopeful future", appears to me to be an unnecessary act, even though you advice Japanese artists to do so by way of change. I cannot accept such separation between an artist's function and his moral conscience. The luxury of enjoying special favouritism by virtue of identity with a Government which is engaged in demolition, in its neighbourhood, of all salient bases of life, and of escaping, at the same time, from any direct responsibility by a philosophy of escapism, seems to me to be another authentic symptom of the modern intellectual's betrayal of humanity. Unfortunately the rest of the world is almost cowardly in any adequate expression of its judgement owing to ugly possibilities that it may be hatching for its own future and those who are bent upon doing mischief are left alone to defile their history and blacken their reputation for all time to come. But such impunity in the long run bodes disaster, like unconsciousness of disease in its painless progress of ravage.

I speak with utter sorrow for your people; your letter has hurt me to the depths of my being. I know that one day the disillusionment of your people will be complete, and through laborious centuries they will have to clear the debris of their civilization wrought to ruin by their own war-lords run amok. They will realize that the aggressive war on China is insignificant as compared to the destruction of the inner spirit of chivalry of Japan which is proceeding with a ferocious severity. China is unconquerable, her civilization, under the dauntless leadership of Chiang Kaji-Shek, is displaying marvellous resources; the desperate loyalty of her peoples, united as never before, is creating a new age for that land. Caught unprepared by a gigantic machinery of war, hurled upon her peoples, China is holding her own; no temporary defeats can ever crush her fully aroused spirit. Faced by the borrowed science of Japanese militarism which is crudely western in character, China's stand reveals an inherently superior moral stature. And today I understand more than ever before the meaning of the enthusiasm with which the big-hearted Japanese thinker Okakura assured me that *China is great.*

You do not realize that you are glorifying your neighbour at your own cost. But these are considerations on another plane: the sorrow remains that Japan, in the words of Madame Chiang Kai-Shek which you must have read in the *Spectator*, is creating so many ghosts. Ghosts of immemorial works of Chinese art, of irreplaceable Chinese institutions, of great peace-loving communities drugged, tortured, and destroyed. "Who will lay the ghosts?" she asks. Japanese and Chinese people, let us hope, will join hands together, in no distant future, in wiping off memories of a bitter past. True Asian humanity will be reborn. Poets will raise their song and be unashamed, one believes, to declare their faith again in a human destiny which cannot admit of a scientific mass production of fratricide.

Yours sincerely,
Rabindranath Tagore

P.S.—I find that you have already released your letter to the Press; I take it that you want me to publish my answer in the same manner.

41 Sakurayama, Nakano, Tokyo
October 2, 1938

DEAR TAGORE,

Your eloquent letter, dated Sept. 1st was duly received. I am glad that the letter inspired me to write you once more.

No one in Japan denies the greatness of China,—I mean the Chinese people. China of the olden times was great with philosophy, literature and art—particularly in the T'ang dynasty. Under Chinese influence Japan started to build up her own civilization. But I do not know why we should not oppose the misguided government of China for the old debt we owe her people. And nobody in Japan ever dreams that we can conquer China. What Japan is doing in China, it is only, as I already said, to correct the mistaken idea of Chiang Kai-

shek; on this object Japan is staking her all. If Chiang comes to senses and extends his friendly hands for the future of both the countries, China and Japan, the war will be stopped at once.

I am glad that you still admire Kakuzo Okakura with enthusiasm as a thinker. If he lives today, I believe that he will say the same thing as I do. Betraying your trust, many Chinese soldiers in the front surrender to our Japanese force, and join with us in the cry, "Down with Chiang Kai-shek!" Where is Chinese loyality to him?

Having no proper organ of expression, Japanese opinion is published only seldom in the West; and real fact is always hidden and often comouflaged by cleverness of the Chinese who are a born propagandist. They are strong in foreign languages, and their tongues never fail. While the Japanese are always reticent, even when situation demands their explanation. From the experiences of many centuries, the Chinese have cultivated an art of speaking, for they had been put under such a condition that divided their country to various antagonistic divisions; and being always encroached by the Western countries, they depended on diplomacy to turn a thing to their advantage. Admitting that China completely defeated Japan in foreign publicity, it is sad that she often goes too far, and plays trickery. For one instance I will call your attention to the reproduced picture from a Chinese paper on page 247 of the Modern Review for last August, as a living specimen of "Japanese Atrocities in China: Execution of a Chinese Civilians." So awful pictures they are,—awful enough to make ten thousand enemies of Japan in a foreign country. But the pictures are nothing but a Chinese invention, simple and plain, because the people in the scenes are all Chinese, slaughterers and all. Besides any one with commonsense would know, if he stops for a moment, that it is impossible to take such a picture as these at the front. Really I cannot understand how your friend-editor of the Modern Review happened to published them.

It is one's right to weave a dream at the distance, and to create an object of sympathy at the expense of China. Believe me that I am second to none in understanding the Chinese masses who are patient and diligent, clinging to the ground. But it seems that you are not acquainted with the China of corruption and bribery, and of war lords who put money in a foreign bank when their country is at stake. So long as the country is controlled by such polluted people, the Chinese have only a little chance to create a new age in their land. They have to learn first of all the meaning of honesty and sacrifice before dreaming it. But for this new age in Asia, Japan is engaging in the war, hoping to obtain a good result and mutual benefit that follow the swords. We must have a neighbouring country, strong and true, which is glad to co-operate with us in our work of reconstructing Asia in the new way. That is only what we expect from China.

Japan's militarism is a tremendous affair no doubt. But if you condemn Japan, because of it, you are failing to notice that Chiang's China is a far more great military country than Japan. China is now mobilizing seven or eight million soldiers armed with European weapons. From cowardice or being

ignorant of the reason why they had to fight, the Chinese soldiers are so unspirited in the front. But for this unavailability you cannot forgive Chiang's militarism, if your denial is absolute and true. For the last twenty years Chiang had been trying to arm his country under the western advisers; and these western advisers were mostly from Italy and Germany, the countries of which you are so impatient. And it should be attributed to their advice that he started war; though it is too late to blame the countries that formally provided him with military knowledge, it is never too late for him to know that the western countries are not worthy of trust. There is no country in the world, that comes to rescue the other at her own expense. If you are a real sympathizer of China, you should come along with your program what she had to do, not passing idly with your condemnation of Japan's militarism. And if you have to condemn militarism, that condemnation should be equally divided between China and Japan.

It is true that when two quarrel, both are in the wrong. And when fighting is over, both the parties will be put perhaps in the mental situation of one who is crying over spilt milk. War is atrocious,—particularly when it is performed in a gigantic way as in China today. I hope that you will let me apply your accusation of Japanese atrocity to China, just as it is. Seeing no atrocity in China, you are speaking about her as an innocent country. I expected something impartial from a poet.

I have to think (*sic*) you that you called my attention to the "Modern intellectual's betrayal of humanity," whatever it be. One can talk any amount of idealism, apart from in reality, if he wishes, and take the pleasure of one belonging to no country. But sharing patriotism equally with the others, we are trying to acquit the duty of our birthright, and believe that it is never too late to talk Heaven when immediate matter of the earth is well arranged.

Supposing that we accept your advice to become a van-guard of humanity according to your prescription, and supposing that we leave China to her own will, and save ourselves from being a "betrayal of the intellectuals," who will promise us with the safety of Japanese spirit that we cultivated with pairs of thousand years, under the threat of communism across a fence? We don't want to barter our home land for an empty name of intellectuals. No, you mustn't talk nonsense! God forbid!

Admitting, that militarism is criminal, I think that, if your humanity makes life a mutilated mud-fish, its crime would never be smaller than the other. I spent my whole life admiring beauty and truth, with one hope to lift life to a dignity, more vigorous and noble; from this reason, I knelt before the Kalighat, Calcutta, because Kali's smeared face in madness, with three wild eyes, promised me with a forthcoming peace. And also at Elephanta Island; near Bombay, I learned from the Three-headed Siva a lesson of destruction as inevitable truth of life. Then I wrote:

"Thy slaughter's sword is never so unkind as it appears.
Creation is great, but destroying is still greater,
Because up from the ashes new Wonder take its flight."

But if you command me to obey the meekness of humanity under all the circumstances, you are forgetting what your old Hindu philosophy taught you. I say this not only for my purpose, because such reflection is important for any country.

I wonder who reported to you that we are killing innocent people and bombing on their unprotected towns. Far from it, we are trying to do our best for helping them, because we have so much to depend on them for co-operation in the future, and because Bushido command us to limit punishment to a thing which only deserves it. It was an apt measure of our Japanese soldiers that the famous cave temples of the 5th century in North China were saved from savage rapacity of the defeated Shinese (*sic*) soldiers in flight. Except Madame Chiang with frustrated brain, no one has seen the "ghosts of Chinese institutions and art, destroyed". And if those institutions and art, admitting that they are immemorial and irreplaceable, had been ever destroyed, it is but the crazy work of Chinese soldiers, because they want to leave a desert to Japan. You ought to know better since you are acquainted with so many Japanese, whether or not we are qualified to do anything barbarous.

I believe that you are versed in Bushido. In olden times soldiery was lifted in Japan to a status equally high as that of art and morality. I have no doubt that our soldiers will not betray the tradition. If there is difference in Japanese militarism from that of the West, it is because the former is not without moral element. Who only sees its destroying power is blind to its other power in preservation. Its human aspect is never known in the foreign countries, because they shut their eyes to it. Japan is still as unknown existence in the West. Having so many things to displease you, Japanese militarism has still something that will please you, if you come to know more about it. It is an excusable existence for the present condition of Japan. But I will leave the full explanation of it to some later occasion.

Believe me that I am never an eulogist of Japanese militarism, because I have many differences with it. But I cannot help accepting as a Japanese what Japan is doing now under the circumstances, because I see no other way to show our minds to China. Of course when China stops fighting, and we receive her friendly hands, neither grudge nor ill feeling will remain in our minds. Perhaps with some sense of repentance, we will then proceed together on the great work of reconstructing the new world in Asia.

I often draw in my mind a possible man who can talk from a high domain and act as a peace-maker. You might write General Chiang, I hope, and tell him about the foolishness of fighting in the presence of a great work that is waiting. And I am sorry that against the high-pitched nature of your letter, mine is low-toned and faltering, because as a Japanese subject I belong to one of the responsible parties of the conflict.

Finally one word more. What I fear most is the present atmosphere in India, that tends to willfully blacken Japan to alienate her from your country. I have so many friends there, whose beautiful nature does not harmonise with it. My last experiences in your country taught me how to love and respect her.

Besides there are in Japan so many admirers of your countrymen with your noble self as the first.

Yours sincerely,
YONE NOGUCHI

Uttarayana, Santiniketan, Bengal
October 27, 1938

DEAR NOGUCHI,

I thank you for taking the trouble to write to me again. I have also read with interest your letter addressed to the Editor, Amrita Bazar Patrika, and published in that journal.* It makes the meaning of your letter to me more clear.

I am flattered that you still consider it worthwhile to take such pains to convert me to your point of view, and I am really sorry that I am unable to come to my senses, as you have been pleased to wish it. It seems to me that it is futile for either of us to try to convince the other since your faith in the infallible right of Japan to bully other Asiatic nations into line with your Government's policy is not shared by me, and my faith that patriotism which claims the right to bring to the altar of its country the sacrifice of *other* people's rights and happiness will endanger rather than strengthen the foundation of any great civilization, is sneered at by you as the "quiescence of a spiritual vagabond".

If you can convince the Chinese that your armies are bombing their cities and rendering their women and children homeless beggars—those of them

* The following is the text of the letter referred to:

Dear Editor,

Dr. Tagore's reply to my letter was a disappointment, to use his words, hurted me to the depths of my being. Now I am conscious that language is an ineffective instrument to carry one's real meaning. When I wanted an impartial criticism he gave me something of prejudiced bravado under the beautiful name of humanity. Just for a handful of dream, and for an intellectual's ribbon to stick in his coat, he has lost a high office to correct the mistaken idea of reality.

It seems to us that when Dr. Tagore called the doctrine of "Asia for Asia" a political blackmail, he relinquished his patriotism to boast quiescence of a spiritual vagabond, and wilfully supporting the Chinese side, is encouraging Soviet Russia, not to mention the other Western countries. I meant my letter to him to be a plea for the understanding of Japan's viewpoint, which, in spite of its many failures, is honest. I wonder whether it is a poet's privilege to give one whipping before listening to his words. When I dwelled on the saving of the people of Japan at the present time of conflict, he denounced it as their government's exploitation "for gun running and invasion of a neighbour's hearth and home." But when he does not use the same language towards his friend China his partiality is something monstrous. And I wonder where is his former heart which made us Japanese love him and honour him. But still we are patient, believing that he will come to senses and take a neutral dignity fitting to a prophet who does not depart from fair judgment.

Living in a country far from your country, I do not know where Dr. Tagore's reply appeared in print. Believing that you are known to his letter, I hope that you will see way to print this letter of mine in your esteemed paper.

Yours sincerely,
YONE NOGUCHI

that are not transformed into "mutilated mud-fish" to borrow one of your own phrases—, if you can convince these victims that they are only being subjected to a benevolent treatment which will in the end "save" their nation, it will no longer be necessary for you to convince us of your country's noble intentions. Your righteous indignation against the "polluted people" who are burning their own cities and art-treasures (and presumably bombing their own citizens) to malign your soldiers, reminds me of Napoleon's noble wrath when he marched into a deserted Moscow and watched its palaces in flames. I should have expected from you who are a poet at least that much of imagination to feel, to what inhuman despair a people must be reduced to willingly burn their own handiwork of years', indeed centuries', labour. And even as a good nationalist, do you seriously believe that the mountain of bleeding corpses and the wilderness of bombed and burnt cities that is every day widening between your two countries, is making it easier for your two peoples to stretch your hands in a clasp of ever-lasting good will?

You complain that while the Chinese, being "dishonest", are spreading their malicious propaganda, your people, being "honest", are reticent. Do you not know, my friend, that there is no propaganda like good and noble deeds, and that if such deeds be yours, you need fear no "trickery" of your victims? Nor need you fear the bogey of communism if there is no exploitation of the poor among your own people and the workers feel that they are justly treated.

I must thank you for explaining to me the meaning of our Indian philosophy and pointing out that the proper interpretation of Kali and Shiva must compel our approval of Japan's "dance of death" in China. I wish you had drawn a moral from a religion more familiar to you and appealed to the Buddha for your justification. But I forget that your priests and artists have already made sure of that, for I saw in a recent issue of "The Osaka Mainichi and The Tokyo Nichi Nichi" (16th September, 1938) a picture of a new colossal image of Buddha erected to bless the massacre of your neighbours.

You must forgive me if my words sound bitter. Believe me, it is sorrow and shame, not anger, that prompt me to write to you. I suffer intensely not only because the reports of Chinese suffering batter against my heart, but because I can no longer point out with pride the example of a great Japan. It is true that there are no better standards prevalent anywhere else and that the so-called civilized peoples of the West are proving equally barbarous and even less "worthy of trust". If you refer me to them, I have nothing to say. What I should have liked is to be able to refer them to you. I shall say nothing of my own people, for it is vain to boast until one has succeeded in sustaining one's principles to the end.

I am quite conscious of the honour you do me in asking me to act as a peace-maker. Were it in any way possible for me to bring you two peoples together and see you freed from this death-struggle and pledged to the great common "work of reconstructing the new world in Asia", I would regard the sacrifice of my life in the cause a proud privilege. But I have no power save that of moral persuasion, which you have so eloquently ridiculed. You who want me

to be impartial, how can you expect me to appeal to Chiang Kai-Shek to give up resisting until the aggressors have first given up their aggression? Do you know that last week when I received a pressing invitation from an old friend of mine in Japan to visit your country, I actually thought for a moment, foolish idealist as I am, that your people may really need my services to minister to the bleeding heart of Asia and to help extract from its riddled body the bullets of hatred? I wrote to my friend:

> "Though the present state of my health is hardly favourable for any strain of a long foreign journey, I should seriously consider your proposal if proper opportunity is given me to carry out my own mission while there, which is to do my best to establish a civilized relationship of national amity between two great peoples of Asia who are entangled in a desolating mutual destruction. But as I am doubtful whether the military authorities of Japan, which seem bent upon devastating China in order to gain their object will allow me the freedom to take my own course, I shall never forgive myself if I am tempted for any reason whatever to pay a friendly visit to Japan just at this unfortunate moment and thus cause a grave misunderstanding. You know I have a genuine love for the Japanese people and it is sure to hurt me too painfully to go and watch crowds of them being transported by their rulers to a neighbouring land to perpetrate acts of inhumanity which will brand their name with a lasting stain in the history of Man."

After the letter was despatched came the news of the fall of Canton and Hankow. The cripple, shorn of his power to strike, may collapse but to ask him to forget the memory of his mutilation as easily as you want me to, I must expect him to be an angel.

Wishing your people whom I love, not success, but remorse.

Yours sincerely,
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

84 W.B. YEATS

LOSS BY DEATH is not for Yeats. He had already reached classic heights of literature while alive. Today my mind goes back to the time when I first met Yeats, full of exuberant life and youthfulness. The same picture of the glowing genius of a magnificent personality will, I am sure, remain unfaded in memory of all time. I shall cherish to the end the fact that my life was linked with the memory of one of the rarest poets of modern Europe.

1939

85 BIHAR CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION: 21ST CONFERENCE

THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT which is gradually gaining ground in our economic life, because it represents the highest truth of man—the truth of his unity, is also the only way that can lead to the true wealth of the people, the wealth born of the great meeting of individual wills. The huge megatherium of capitalism with its stupendous tail of bought up workers will naturally become extinct when individual men come to realize their own truth—not through the indecent exaggeration of their exclusive wealth but through a combination of their individuality founded upon mutual trust and undertaking.

Barbarism is exclusive, especially guarding its cave-dwellings of isolation. And the barbarians, the mistrustful of other; constantly ready with their bows and arrows, remain stunted in mind and poor in spirit. Likewise the isolated disproportion of exclusive wealth is barbarous. It will become civilized when it evolves the true fulfilment of its moral character, its power of co-operation and when it grows sincerely ashamed of its iniquitous greed and of the unseemly scrimmage of competition through which one gains profit at the cost of another's loss.

20 August 1939

86 A TRIBUTE TO MAHATMA GANDHI

OCCASIONALLY THERE APPEAR in the arena of politics, makers of history, whose mental height is above the common level of humanity. They wield an instrument of power, which is almost physical in its compelling force and often relentless, exploiting the weakness in human nature—its greed, fear, or vanity. When Mahatma Gandhi came and opened up the path of freedom for India, he had no obvious medium of power in his hand, no overwhelming authority of coercion. The influence which emanated from his personality was ineffable, like music, like beauty. Its claim upon others was great because of its revelation of a spontaneous self-giving. This is the reason why our people have hardly ever laid emphasis upon his natural cleverness in manipulating recalcitrant facts. They have rather dwelt upon the truth which shines through his character in lucid simplicity. This is why, though his realm of activity lies in practical politics, peoples' minds have been struck by the analogy of his character with that of the great masters, whose spiritual inspiration comprehends and yet transcends all varied manifestations of humanity, and makes the

face of worldliness turn to the light that comes from the eternal source of wisdom.

1939

87 EUROPEAN ORDER AND WORLD ORDER

I HAVE READ your letter and the P.E.P. pamphlet with profound interest—it does one good to know that all civilized thought and planning have not been submerged by war-passions. Your letter gives me new hope and is a cofirmation of the spiritual integrity of the European civilization in which I have always believed—the wide-awake humanity of the West that diplomatic machinations can never crush. I can realize from your brochure on (*European Order And World Order*), that the best minds of Europe are being put to a severe test, that they have the sanction of the peoples of Europe in trying to formulate a Federal Union which will unite the peoples in spite of the ring leaders of blind Nationalism, who, sitting safely in the citadels of power, send the youth of the land to destroy each other on the battle field. In Europe, the real battle goes on—that between organized passion and unconquerable majesty of the human heart—and your peoples have the vitality to live through the struggle. I can't believe in the victory of any belligerent powers,—as belligerents they are doomed. I can hope for the triumph of the united peoples of Europe under some such system as you propose in your letter to Lord Halifax and in the programme sponsored by the P. E. P.

'But what about India? It does not need a defeatist to feel deeply anxious about the future of millions who with all their innate culture and their peaceful traditions are being simultaneously subjected to hunger, disease, exploitations foreign and indigenous, and the seething discontents of communalism. Our people do not posses the vitality that you have in Europe; and the crisis, even before this war started in the West, had become acute in India. Needless to say, interested groups led by ambition and outside instigation, are today using the communal motive for destructive political ends.'

February 1940

88 'FREEDOM OF MIND'

DEAR NEVINSON,

I have read your circular letter with great interest and entirely associate myself with the freedom of mind which you advocate. As you know, by

accepting Presidentship of the *Indian Council of Civil Liberties*, I have publicly associated myself with organized effort to further democratic ideals for our peoples. The European and the Far-Eastern Wars, as well as the complications in the Indian situation, have made our task more imperative.

My age and the work that I have been doing in this corner of Bengal where we have our Educational and Rural Development Centres, make it difficult for me to extend my activities in other fields. But I join you in your crusade for the liberty of the human spirit and share your hope that the Western Civilization will yet triumph over the ordeal that it has set for itself. In some ways it is even harder for India to pursue the path of freedom, not only our unnatural political situation which hampers free national expression but the legacies of mediaeval habits and thought will have to be overcome. It is, therefore, all the more necessary that leaders of thought in your country and ours should counteract the passions of the day and maintain close contact in our human endeavour.

February 1940

89 TELEGRAM TO ROOSEVELT

[*The draft of Tagore's telegram to President Franklin D. Roosevelt on the Fall of Paris during World War II*]

TODAY, WE STAND in awe before the fearfully destructive force that has so suddenly swept the world. Every moment I deplore the smallness of our means and the feebleness of our voice in India so utterly inadequate to stem in the least, the tide of evil that has menaced the permanence of civilization.

All our individual problems of politics to-day have merged into one supreme world politics which, I believe, is seeking the help of the United States of America as the last refuge of the spiritual man, and these few lines of mine merely convey my hope, even if unnecessary, that she will not fail in her mission to stand against this universal disaster that appears so imminent.

June 1940

90 BENGAL'S GREAT INHERITANCE

BENGAL'S GREAT INHERITANCE is her culture which can only be threatened by our own weakness, no external power can deprive us of freedom in the sacred shrine of learning or compel us to compromise our integrity by menace of fear or favour.

We are proud of our Bengali language, which must be preserved from harm and nourished by the devotion of our people; no sacrifice would be too great in the task of strengthening its foundation in the minds of our new generation at the educational institutions and outside.

Having devoted over 70 years of my life to the service of our mother-language and to the welfare of Bengal I have earned the right to make this appeal! My age and health prevent me from taking part in public affairs, but the danger which menaces the cultural existence of my own province has touched me profoundly and I cannot help sending these few words from my sick bed.

December 1940

91 MAN'S LOST HERITAGE

I AM PASSING through a period of physical suffering. The doctors have forbidden me to think or to talk. All the same I cannot help it. The doctors do not know that along with physical agony, I am conscious of another pain which they cannot control. The failure of humanity in the West to preserve the worth of their civilization and the dignity of man which they had taken centuries to build up, weighs like a nightmare on my mind.

It seems clear to me that this failure is due to man's repudiation of moral values in the guidance of their national affairs and to their belief that every thing is determined by a physical chain of events which could be manipulated by man's cunning or might. The consequences of this belief are proving terrible to man. The first experiment in this diabolical faith was launched in Manchuria. What it has demonstrated is this: that though the poor and innocent people of China have suffered, those that were responsible for this suffering and for like suffering elsewhere, have all been drawn into this vortex. Those who built their power on moral cynicism are themselves proving its victims. The nemesis is daily growing more ruthless.

Even that great and proud power which had no copunction in trampling on our rights, is now reduced to the tragic state of having to defend its own elementary right of existence against foreign menace. Despite our humiliation at its hands, it is not a sight which we can contemplate with ease. Rather we should take a lesson from its fate and beware of moral irresponsibility in the direction of our own national affairs.

We are in the habit of calling Chengiz Khan's hordes barbarians, but not even the terrible Mongols were guilty of such gross betrayal of Humanity as the so-called civilized nations of today are perpetrating before our very eyes. But in the very act of this condemnation one is arrested by one's sympathy for their sufferings. For their own peoples are paying the price of these wrongs.

My utmost sympathy goes out to the brave and innocent people of China

who have suffered most and deserved least of this suffering. They have been the victims of a violence they never perpetrated on others, they have been dragged down into the pit of destruction which they did nothing to dig. I hope they will survive the wrong and will once more be enabled to build up a great civilization.

In the midst of this insane orgy of violence and destruction, I shall continue to hold fast to my faith in the final recovery of man's lost heritage of moral worth. Man is great. We who stand by him have the privilege of sharing disaster and defeat, but never the ignominy of betraying the great trust of humanity. I know that even in this demented world, there are individuals scattered all over who believe with me.'

November 1940

92 WELCOME TO XU BEIHONG

WE WELCOME YOU as a messenger of China's great culture; you have brought to us in India the gift of spiritual sympathy which, centuries ago, united our ancient humanities. China and India shared the dawn of a great Renaissance, and even in these days of political cataclysm the memoried light of that comradeship remains.

True rebirth of a civilization comes not from a deadly pursuit of power,which alienates and destroys, but from expression of its inner heart; such an expression, generous and ever renewing, brings neighbours together in the great adventure of mankind.

Here in Santiniketan we have striven to maintain that inner spirit of understanding, that integrity of work guided by ideals and linked with service of man, which, we believe Asia has to offer to civilization. You have come to us with the vision of art, with the sensitive appeal of truth which must triumph over rude shocks of circumstance; your visit will strengthen us, and bring our effort nearer to fulfilment. With great joy I look forward to an era of warm kinship between our neighbouring lands and to the assertion of historical forces in the East that will save us all from the encroaching darkness.'

February 1940

93 MESSAGE TO 'FORWARD'

I HAVE GREAT faith in humanity. Like the sun it can be clouded, but never extinguished. I admit that at this time when guns are thundering all the world

over, the baser elements appear predominant. The powerful are exulting at the number of their victims. They take the name of science to cultivate the school-boy superstition that they have certain physical signs indicating their eternal right to rule, as the explosive force of the earthquake once might have claimed, with enough evidence, its never-ending sway over the destiny of this earth. But they in their turn will be disappointed.

Theirs is the cry of a past that is already exhausted, a past that has thrived upon the exclusive spirit of national individualism, which will no longer be able to keep the balance in its perpetual disharmony with its surroundings. Only those races will prosper who, for the sake of their own perfection and permanent safety, are ready to cultivate the spiritual magnanimity of mind that enables the soul of man to be realized in the heart of all races.

For men to come near to one another, and yet to continue to ignore the claims of humanity, is a sure process of suicide. We are waiting for the time when the spirit of the age will be incarnated in a complete human truth and the meeting of men will be translated into the Unity of Man.

February 1941

94 REPLY TO MISS RATHBONE

I HAVE BEEN deeply pained at Miss Rathbone's open letter to Indians. I do not know who Miss Rathbone is but I take it that she represents the mentality of the average 'well-intentioned' Britisher. Her letter is mainly addressed to Jawaharlal and I have no doubt that if that noble fighter of freedom's battle had not been gagged behind prison bars by Miss Rathbone's countrymen, he would have made a fitting and spirited reply to her gratuitous sermon. His enforced silence makes it necessary for me to voice my protest even from my sick bed. The lady has ill served the cause of her people by addressing so indiscreet, indeed impertinent, a challenge to our conscience. She is scandalised at our ingratitude,—that having 'drunk deeply at the wells of English thought' we should still have some thought left for our poor country's interests.

English thought, in so far as it is representative of the best traditions of western enlightenment, has indeed taught us much, but let me add, that those of our countrymen who have profited by it have done so despite the official British attempts to ill educate us. We might have achieved introduction to Western learning through any other European language. Have all the other peoples in the world waited for the British to bring them enlightenment? It is sheer insolent self-complacence on the part of our so-called English friends to assume that had they not 'taught' us we would still have remained in the dark ages. Through the official British channels of education in India have flowed to our children in schools not the best of English thought but its refuse, which

has only deprived them of a wholesome repast at the table of their own culture.

Assuming, however, that English language is the only channel left to us for 'enlightenment', all that 'drinking deeply at its wells has come to us in 1931, even after a couple of centuries of British administration, only about one per cent of the population was found to be literate in English,—while in the USSR in 1932, after only fifteen years of Soviet administration, 98 per cent of the children were educated. (These figures are taken from *The Statesman's* year-Book, an English publication, not likely to err of the Russian side). But even more necessary than the so-called culture are the bare elementary needs of existence, on which alone can any superstructure of enlightenment rest.

And what have the British, who held tight the purse strings of our nation for more than two centuries and exploited its resources, done for our poor people? I look around and see famished bodies crying for bread. I have seen women in villages dig up mud for a few drops of drinking water, for wells are even more scarce in Indian villages than schools.

I know that the population of England itself is today in danger of starvation and I sympathise with them, but when I see how the whole might of the British navy is engaged in convoying food vessels to the English shores and when I recollect that I have seen our people perish of hunger and not even a cartload of rice brought to their door from the neighbouring district, I cannot help contrasting the British at home with the British in India.

Shall we be then grateful to the British, if not for keeping fed, at least for preserving law and order?

I look around and see riots raging all over the country. When scores of Indian lives are lost, our property looted, our women dishonoured, the mighty British arm stir in no action, only the British voice is raised from overseas to chide us for unfitness to put our house in order.

Examples are not wanting in history when even fully armed warriors have shrunk before superior might and contingencies have arisen in the present war when even the bravest among the British, French and Greek soldiers have had to evacuate the battlefield in Europe because they were overwhelmed by superior armaments,—but when our poor, unarmed and helpless peasants, encumbered with crying babes, flee from homes unable to protect them from armed goondas, the British officials, perhaps smile in contempt at our cowardice!

Every British civilian in England is armed today for protecting his hearth and home against the enemy, but in India even lathi-training was forbidden by decree. Our people have been deliberately disarmed and emasculated in order to keep them perpetually cowed and at the mercy of their armed masters.

The British hate the Nazis for merely challenging their world-mastery and Miss Rathbone expects us to kiss the hand of her people in servility for having riveted chains on ours. A Government must be judged not by pretensions of its spokesman but by its actual and effective contribution to the well-being of the people.

It is not so much because the British are foreigners that they are unwelcome to us and have found no place in our hearts, as because, while pretending to be trustees of our welfare, they have betrayed the great trust and have sacrificed the happiness of millions in India to bloat the pockets of new capitalists at home.

I should have thought that the decent Britisher would at least keep silent at these wrongs and be grateful to us for our inaction, but that he should add insult to injury and pour salt over our wounds, passes all bounds of decency.

June 1941

B. On Books

THIRTY SONGS FROM THE PUNJAB AND KASHMIR

WHEN I WAS given an opportunity of hearing Ratan Devi sing some Indian songs, I felt uneasy in my mind. I never could believe it possible for an Englishwoman to give us any music that could be hailed as Indian. I was almost certain that it was going to be something that defies all definitions, and that I was expected to sit listening to some of those contemptible tunes that a foreigner, without the power to discriminate and patience to learn, usually picks up in India.

I remembered the unlucky day in my early boyhood, when I was asked by some English ladies to sing. I happened to know a tune of a non-descript kind which had the reputation, with us, of being of Italian origin, and I confidently selected that one in the hope of its being readily appreciated by my audience. It produced an outburst of merriment, quite unexpected in its irrepressible suddenness, and I was emphatically assured that it might be anything but Italian.

Since then, if asked to sing before Europeans, I boldly took my chance and dealt with Indian songs of unexceptionable character. The result used to be less disastrous, but hardly more satisfactory. So I came to the conclusion that mere tunes cannot stand by themselves, and unless given with some idea of the musical system to which they belong lack all their lustre and meaning. In recent times the attention of Europe has been drawn to all branches of Oriental arts, and I have witnessed the sight of Europeans listening to Indian music with deep interest. But all the same, it is always difficult to know if their appreciation is not altogether fantastic, and until you hear them sing or play, and thus come into the touch of their heart, you cannot realize their true feeling.

It is a well-known fact that history is prone to repeat its jokes; and while I was dreading lest it should again be my turn to be the victim of its second perpetration of the one I was subjected to years ago, only with slight variations this time, Ratan Devi began by singing a few European folk-songs with the piano accompaniment. They were delightful, and I prayed in my mind that she should end the evening as she had begun, with the music familiar to her. But fortunately for me, my prayer was not granted.

Ratan Devi left her piano and sat on the floor, squatting down in Indian fashion, and took up the *tambura* on her lap. After the first few notes my misgivings were completely dispelled. The tunes she sang were not of the cheap kind that can easily adapt itself to the uninformed taste of any hasty foreign traveller, satisfying his shallow curiosity. They were Behag, Kandra, Malkaus,—sung with all their richness of details, depth of modulations and exquisite feeling. The times that she observed were the usual difficult ones in Indian music, the cadence of which is never too obvious or the division of beats

too emphatic. Neither tunes nor times were the least modified to make them simpler or to suit them to the European training of the singer.

Though the music was immaculately Indian, yet Ratan Devi's voice was her own, and it could not possibly be mistaken for that of any Indian *ustad*. In our country the execution of a song is considered to be of minor importance. India goes to the extreme of almost holding with contempt any finesse in singing, and our master singers never take the least trouble to make their voice and manner attractive. They are not ashamed if their gestures are violent, their top notes cracked and their bass notes unnatural. They take it to be their sole function to display their perfect mastery over all the intricacies of times and tunes, forms and formalities of the classic traditions. Those of the audience who have the human weakness to demand something more, who are not content with the presentation of a music with its richness of forms and play of power, but whose senses have to be satisfied as well, are held to be beneath the notice of any self-respecting artists. They think it to be the duty of the hireling musicians of dancing parties to cater for the enjoyment of fastidious dandies whose eyes and ears are apt to take offence at the least touch of roughness. Anyhow, the cultivation of the flawless perfection of the exterior has been severely neglected in India.

The ideal is otherwise in Europe. A stupendously vast amount of energy is constantly occupied in this country in perfecting outward details in everything, the least deviation from which takes away from the value of a thing much more than it deserves. Here the stage arrangement must be extravagantly perfect and the artist in the pride of the intrinsic merit of his art cannot afford to pay his respect to the public by appearing careless in the least detail of execution. As Europe is willing to pay a very high price for this, perhaps she has got her reward.

I at once realized this when I heard Ratan Devi sing. There was not a sign of effort in her beautiful voice, and not the least suggestion of the uncouthness we are accustomed to in our singers. The casket was as perfect as the gem.

Sometimes the meaning of a poem is better understood in a translation, not necessarily because it is more beautiful than the original, but as in the new setting the poem has to undergo a trial, it shines more brilliantly if it comes out triumphant. So it seemed to me that in Ratan Devi's singing our songs gained something in feeling and truth. Listening to her I felt more clearly than ever that our music is the music of cosmic emotion. It deals not primarily with the drama of the vicissitudes of human life. It does not give emphasis to the social enjoyment of men. In fact, in all our festivities the business of our music seems to me to bring to the heart of the crowded gathering the sense of the solitude and vastness that surround us on all sides. It is never its function to provide fuel for the flame of our gaiety, but to temper it and add to it a quality of depth and detachment. The truth of this becomes evident when one considers that *Sāhānā* is the *rāginī* specially used for the occasion of wedding festivals. It is not at all gay or frolicsome, but almost sad in its solemnity. Our *rāginīs* of springtide and rains, of midnight and daybreak, have the profound

pathos of the all-pervading intimacy, yet immense aloofness of Nature.

Ratan Devi sang an *alap* in Kāndra, and I forgot for a moment that I was in a London drawing-room. My mind got itself transported in the magnificence of an eastern night, with its darkness, transparent, yet unfathomable, like the eyes of an Indian maiden, and I seemed to be standing alone in the depth of its stillness and stars.

1913

TO THE NATION

THE PEOPLES ARE living beings. They have their distinct personalities. Therefore the French and the Germans, who not only live in close neighbourhood, but also contain in themselves in a large measure a racial similarity, have their individual differences that cannot be overlooked.

But the nations are not living beings, they are organizations of power. Their physical and mental aspects are monotonously the same everywhere. Their differences are merely the differences in degree of efficiency. When by some chance, through some cracks, the human personality sends up its own life shoots, the hard consistency of organization suffers, but the people finds its own manifestation. But where the subjugation of humanity by the machine is complete, there the Nation is triumphant. In the modern world the fight is going on between the living spirit of the people and the methods of Nation organizing. It is like the struggle that went on in Central Asia, between man's cultivated area of habitation and the continual encroachment of desert sands, till the human region of life and beauty was choked out of existence. When the spread of the higher ideals of humanity is not held as important, the hardening system of national efficiency grows in strength, and at least for some limited period of time it proudly proves itself to be the fittest to survive.

But it is the survival of that part of man which is the least living. And this is the reason why dead monotony is the sign of the spread of the Nation. The modern towns which present the physiognomy of this dominance of the Nation are everywhere the same from San Francisco to London from London to Tokyo,—they show no faces but merely masks.

The peoples, being living persons, must have their self-expression, and this leads to creations. These creations are literature, art, philosophy, social symbolism and ceremonials. They are different in different peoples, but they are not antagonistic. They are like different dishes in one common feast, adding richness to our enjoyment and understanding of truth. They are making the world of man fertile of life and variedly beautiful.

But the Nations do not create, they merely produce and destroy. Organizations of production are necessary—even the organizations of destruction may be so—but when actuated by greed and hatred they occupy the

best part of our world, crowding into a corner the living man who creates, then the harmony is lost and human history runs at a breakneck speed towards fatal catastrophe.

Humanity, where it is living, is guided by inner ideals, but where it is dead organization it is impervious to them. For this organizing endeavour has no growth, but merely augmentation. Therefore its building process is external and it does not fully respond to our inner moral guidance. In this building we can pile up one stone brick upon another and cement them according to our latest scientific recipe. But its foundation is the living nature of man, which cannot suffer such dead weight to be indefinitely loaded upon its heart. Therefore at last, some apparently slight cause makes it move and heave and the huge structure resting upon it sways and cracks. Once it begins to come down we do not know how to stop it. It looks irrational and evil in its sudden course of disruption and mere spouting of moral maxims or prudent advices is unable to prevent the force of moral gravitation in its action of restoring balance.

The ideal of the social man is unselfishness, but the ideal of the nation is selfishness. Therefore, selfishness in the individual is condemned, but in the nation it is extolled. This leads to a hopeless moral blindness, confusing the religion of the people with the religion of the nation. Therefore we find men convinced of the superior claims of Christianity because Christian nations are in possession of the greater part of the world. It is like supporting a thief's religion by quoting the amount of his stolen property. Nations celebrate their successful massacre of men by thanking God in their churches. They forget that Thugs also ascribed their success in manslaughter to the favour of their goddess. But in the case of the latter their goddess frankly represented the principle of destruction. It was this criminal tribe's own murderous instinct deified; the instinct, not of one individual, but of the whole community, therefore held sacred. In the same manner in modern churches, selfishness, hatred, vanity and greed in their collective aspect of national instincts do not scruple to share the homage paid to God.

We must admit that evils there are in human nature and in spite of our faith in moral laws and training in self-control they come out in individual cases of unrighteousness. But they carry on their foreheads their own brand of infamy, and their very successes add to their monstrosity.

All through man's history there will be some who will suffer and others who will cause suffering—and the conquest of evil will never be a fully accomplished fact but a continuous process in our civilization, like the process of burning in a flame.

All creation is the harmony of the contradiction between the eternal ideal of perfection and the infinite incompleteness of realization. So long as the positive ideal of goodness keeps step with the negative incompleteness of attainment, so long as there is no absolute separation between them, we need not be afraid of suffering and loss.

Therefore in former ages when some particular people became turbu-

lent and tried to rob others of their human rights, they sometimes achieved success in their adventures and sometimes failed, and it was nothing more than that. But when this idea of the Nation, which has achieved universal acceptance in the present day, tries to pass off the cult of selfishness as a moral duty simply because that selfishness is gigantic in stature, then it not only commits depredations but attacks the very vitals of humanity. It unconsciously generates in people's minds an attitude of defiance against moral law. For they are taught by repeated devices the lesson that the Nation is greater than the people, and yet this nation scatters to the winds every moral law that the people hold as sacred.

It has been said that a disease becomes most acutely critical when the brain is affected. For it is the brain which is constantly directing the siege against all disease forces. The spirit of national selfishness is that brain disease of a people, which, for the time being, shows itself in red eyes and clenched fists, in violence of talk and movements while all the time shattering its natural system of healing. It is the power of self-sacrifice, the moral faculty of sympathy and co-operation which is the guiding spirit of social vitality. Its function is to maintain a beneficent relation of harmony with its surroundings. But when it begins to ignore the moral law which is universal, and uses it only within the bounds of a narrow sphere, then its strength becomes like the strength of muscular convulsion, which not being a movement of harmonious health, hurts itself in the end.

What is worse, this moral aberration of peoples, decked with the showy title of patriotism, proudly walks abroad, passing itself off as a highly moral influence. Thus it has spread its inflammatory contagion all over the world, proclaiming its fever-flush to be the best sign of health. It is causing at the hearts of peoples, naturally inoffensive, a feeling of envy at not having their temperature as high as their delirious neighbours, and not being able to cause as much mischief as these others do, but merely having to suffer it.

I have often been asked by my Western friends how to cope with this evil which has attained such sinister strength and dimensions. In fact, I have often been blamed for merely giving warning but offering no alternative. Having been bred in the atmosphere of system-worship our mind has got into the habit of a superstitious reverence for system. Therefore when we suffer as a result of a particular system we believe that some other system will bring us better luck. We have forgotten this simple truth that all systems produce evil sooner or later when the psychology which is at the root of them is wrong. The system which is national today may assume the shape of international tomorrow, but so long as men have not forgotten their idolatry of the baser passions, so long as vanity and greed and jealousy can claim moral sacrifice from us when they assume bulkiness of dimensions, the new system will become a new instrument of suffering to man or at best will become ineffectual. And because we are trained to confound good system with moral goodness itself, every ruined system makes us distrustful of moral law.

Therefore, I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the

drainage of those stagnant moral pollutions which give rise to poisonous vapour. For this we are to look for individuals all over the world who must think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly and thus become the channels of universal moral truth. For this truth once introduced goes on with its own living creation, overcoming all hindrances. Our moral ideals do not work with chisels and hammers, but like living seeds in proper ground spread their roots in the soil and their branches in the sky without consulting architects for their plans. What is necessary is purity in thought, feeling and will, and the rest will follow.

This is the reason why, when I met Monsieur Richard in Japan, I became more reassured in my mind about the higher era of civilization than when I read about the big schemes which the politicians are formulating for ushering the age of peace into the world. It is not upon mere number or bulk that our salvation depends but upon the truth which can afford to look small. When gigantic forces of destruction were holding their orgies of fury I saw this solitary young Frenchman, unknown to fame, ... face beaming with the lights of the new dawn and his voice vibrating with the message of new life, and I felt sure that the great Tomorrow has already come though not registered in the Calendar of the statesmen.

17 January 1917

THE WEB OF INDIAN LIFE

INDIANS, LIKE all other peoples of the world, are naturally susceptible to flattery. But unfortunately they have been deprived of their share of it, even in wholesome measure, both by the Fates presiding at the making of their history as well as by the guests partaking of their salt. We have been declared inefficient in practical matters by our governors, foreign missionaries have created a vast literature proclaiming our moral obliquity, while casual visitors have expressed their opinion that we are particularly uninteresting to the intellectual mind of the West. Other peoples' estimate of our work is a great part of our world, and the most important other peoples in the present age being the Europeans, it has become tragic in its effect for us to be unable to evoke their appreciation. There was a time when India could touch the most sensitive part of Europe's mind by storming her imagination with a gorgeous vision of wealth. But cruel time has done its work and the golden illusion has vanished, leaving the ragged poverty of India open to public inspection, charitable or otherwise. Therefore epithets of a disparaging nature from the West find an easy target in India, bespattering her skin and piercing her vital parts. Epithets once given circulation die hard, for they have their breeding-places in our mental laziness and in our natural readiness to believe that whatever is different from ourselves must be offensive. Men can live through

and die happy in spite of disparagement, if it comes from critics with whom they have no dealings. But unfortunately our critics not only have the power to give us a bad name, but also to hang us. They play the part of Providence over three hundred millions of aliens whose language they hardly know, and with whom their acquaintance is of the surface. Therefore the vast accumulation of calumny against India, continually growing and spreading over the earth, secretly and surely obstructs the element of heart from finding an entrance into our government.

One can never do justice from a mere sense of duty to those for whom one lacks respect. And human beings, as we are, justice is not the chief thing that we claim from our rulers. We need sympathy as well, in order to feel that we have human relationship with them and thus retain as much of our self-respect as may be possible.

For some time past a spirit of retaliation has taken possession of our literature and our social world. We have furiously begun to judge our judges, and the judgement comes from hearts sorely stricken with hopeless humiliation. And because our thoughts have an organ whose sound does not reach outside our country, or even the ears of our governors within its boundaries, their expression is growing in vehemence. The prejudice cultivated on the side of the powerful is no doubt dangerous for the weak, but it cannot be wise on the part of the strong to ignore that thorny crop grown on the opposite field. The upsetting of truth in the relationship of the ruler and the ruled can never be compensated by the power that lies in the grip of the mailed fist.

And this was the reason which made us deeply grateful to Sister Nivedita, that great-hearted Western woman, when she gave utterance to her criticism of Indian life. She had won her access to the inmost heart of our society by her supreme gift of sympathy. She did not come to us with the impertinent curiosity of a visitor, nor did she elevate herself on a special high perch with the idea that a bird's eye view is truer than the human view because of its superior aloofness. She lived our life and came to know us by becoming one of ourselves. She became so intimately familiar with our people that she had the rare opportunity of observing us unawares. As a race we have our special limitations and imperfections, and for a foreigner it does not require a high degree of keen-sightedness to detect them. We know for certain that these defects did not escape Nivedita's observation, but she did not stop there to generalize, as most other foreigners do. And because she had a comprehensive mind and extraordinary insight of love she could see the creative ideals at work behind our social forms and discover our soul that has living connexion with its past and is marching towards its fulfilment.

But Sister Nivedita, being an idealist, saw a great deal more than is usually seen by those foreigners who can only see things, but not truths. Therefore I have heard her being discredited by the authority of long experience, which is merely an experience of blindness carried through long years. And of these I have the same words to say which I said to those foreign residents of Japan, whose long experience itself was like a film obscuring the freshness of their

sight, making them conscious of only some outer details, specially where they irritated their minds. Instead of looking on the picture side of the canvas, if they look on the blank side it will not give any more value to their view because of the prolonged period of their staring.

The mental sense, by the help of which we feel the spirit of a people, is like the sense of sight, or of touch—it is a natural gift. It finds its objects, not by analysis, but by direct apprehension. Those who have not this vision merely see events and facts, and not their inner association. Those who have no ear for music, hear sounds, but not the song. Therefore when, by reason of the mere lengthiness of their suffering, they threaten to establish the fact of the tune to be a noise, one need not be anxious about the reputation of the music. Very often it is the mistakes which require a longer time to develop their tangles, while the right answer comes promptly.

It is a truism to say that shadows accompany light. What you feel as the truth of a people, has its numberless contradictions, just as the single fact of the roundness of the earth is contradicted by the innumerable facts of its hills and hollows. Facts can easily be arranged and heaped up into loads of contradiction; yet men having faith in the reality of ideals hold firmly that the vision of truth does not depend upon its dimension, but upon its vitality. And Sister Nivedita has uttered the vital truths about Indian life.

21 October 1917

'A GREAT CHANNEL FOR COMMUNICATION'

THE FOLLOWING anthology has its greatest interest in being a self-recording evidence of the earliest response that Bengal gave to the touch of the West. I think we can safely assess that she is the only country in the Orient which has shown any distinct indication of being thrilled by the voice of Europe as it came to her through literature. We are not concerned with a critical estimate of Bengal's earliest literary adventures in the perilous fields of a foreign tongue. But the important fact is this, that while there are other eastern countries captivated by the sight of the immense power and prosperity which Europe presented to us, Bengal has been stirred by the forces of new ideas breaking upon her from the western horizon. One of its earliest effects upon our students was to rouse them into an aggressive antagonism against orthodox conventions, irrespective of their merits. It was a sudden self-assertion of life after its repression for ages. This shock, which roused Bengal mainly came through literature, and a great part of her energy followed the same channel of literature for its expression.

The most memorable instance of the working of ideas in Bengal in the

time of her early contact of mind with Europe has been Rammohan Roy's message of life to India,—a life centering in the spiritual idea of the all-pervading oneness of God, as inculcated in the Upanishads, and comprehending in its circumference all varieties of human activities from the moral down to the political. It was a call to move and fully to live, not from a blind love of movement, but as directed by an inner guidance coming from the heart of India's own wisdom.

Though the above instance does not directly touch the literary side of our life, yet I cite it to show that it was through her sensitiveness to ideas that Bengal has been deeply moved from the time of her first acquaintance with Europe. And ever since, the same formation of ideals has been going on through various stages of action and reaction. Those who have the talent and love for constructive work can show their productions in a palpable form and with a rapidity of results. But Idea works in the depth of life, bringing about fundamental changes in the very soil and seeds, and sprouts forth from the unseen in its own time in a living creative form. Its early energies are engaged and seem wasted in work of destruction, in explosions of discontent, in constant vacillation in choice, thus easily lending itself to the charge of volatility and indecision. But life has its side which is vigorously destructive and full of uncertainties and contradictions. The signs of perturbation so evident in Bengal, in her social and religious life, in her intellectual adjustments, only show that creative ideas are at work in the centre of her being. I trust I do not merely prove my patriotic bias by saying that, of all countries in the East, Bengal is most earnestly engaged in the exploration of life's ideal. All the great personalities she has produced in the modern time have presented to us according to their light, some ideal solution of life's inner problem. We are fully aware that this is not all that humanity requires, that there are other questions more immediately importunate which have to be answered if we must live; and there are signs that we are beginning actively to recognise this important fact. But all the same we must confess, that whatever it may have cost us, we have dealt more with the ideas that move our soul by kindling our imagination than with acquiring and arranging materials to help us in our struggle for existence. This led to an active conflict in Bengal between the Old and New a constant shifting of her outlooks upon life and unrest owing to her groping for something positive by which she can win for good her own true place in the world.

Our present age of renaissance began its career with an exaggerated faith in the foreign and the external to find out at last that life is a process of constant self-unfolding, whose impulse comes from the centre of its own being. In Bengal we meet with all the different stages of this development and therefore more than in other parts of India, it is here that love of imitation of the West runs to excess pompously proud of its tawdriness and incongruity. On the other hand in Bengal have been originated all the recent movements for the seeking of truth that is our national heritage. The West which at first drew us on to itself, has forcibly flung us back upon an intense consciousness

of our personality. The breath of inspiration, coming from the West has kindled the original spark in us into a flame that lay smothered in the ashes of dead habits and rigidity of traditional froms. This has been illustrated by the course our literature has taken almost completely abandoning its earlier foreign bed, finding its natural channel in the mother tongue. The following collection of English poems written by Bengali authors also proves it, in which the earlier writings are timorously imitative while the later ones boldly burn with their own fire, daring to challenge time's judgement with their claim of immortality. I believe foreign readers, while reading this book, will find much to think of in the fact that Bengal's response through literature to the call of the West is something unique in the history of the modern East. It has a future, for it is quickened with life, and it carries within itself a hope that one day it will become a great channel for communication of ideas between the adventurous West and the East of the immemorial tranquility.

1918

THE ROBBERY OF THE SOIL

THE STANDARD of living in modern civilization has been raised far higher than the average level of our necessity. The strain which this entails serves at the outset to increase our physical and mental alertness. The claim upon our energy accelerates growth. This in its turn produces activity that expresses itself by raising life's standard still higher.

When this standard attains a degree that is a great deal above the normal it encourages the passion of greed. The temptation of an inordinately high level of living, which was once confined only to a small section of the community, becomes widespread. The burden is sure to prove fatal to the civilization which puts no restraint upon the emulation of self-indulgence.

In the geography of our economic world the ups and downs produced by inequalities of fortune are healthy only within a moderate range. In a country divided by the constant interruption of steep mountains no great civilization is possible because in such places the natural flow of communication is always difficult. Like mountains, large fortunes and the enjoyment of luxury are also high walls of segregation; they produce worse divisions in society than any physical barriers.

Where life's simple wealth does not become too exclusive and owners of individual property find no great difficulty in acknowledging their communal responsibility. In fact wealth can even become the best channel for social communication. In former days in India public opinion levied heavy taxes upon wealth and most of the public works of the country were voluntarily contributed by the rich. The water supply, medical help, education and amusement were naturally maintained by men of property through a spon-

taneous sense of mutual obligation. This was made possible because the limits set to the individual right of self-indulgence were narrow and surplus wealth easily followed the channel of social responsibility. In such a society civilization was supported by strong pillars of property, and wealth gave opportunity to the fortunate for self-sacrifice.

But, with the rise of the standard of living, property changes its aspect. It shuts the gate of hospitality which is the best means of social communication. Its owners display their wealth in an extravagance which is self-centred. This creates envy and irreconcilable class division. In other words property becomes anti-social.

Because property itself, with what is called material progress, has become intensely individualistic, the method of gaining it has become a matter of science and not of social ethics. Property and its acquisition break social bonds and drain the life sap of the community. The unscrupulousness involved plays havoc the world over and generates a force that can coax or coerce peoples to deeds of injustice and of wholesale horror.

The forest fire feeds upon the living world from which it springs till it exhausts itself completely along with its fuel. When a passion like greed breaks loose from the fence of social control it acts like that fire, feeding upon the life of society. The end is annihilation. It has ever been the object of the spiritual training of man to fight those passions that are anti-social and to keep them chained. But lately abnormal temptation has set them free and they are fiercely devouring all that is affording them fuel.

There are always insects in our harvest field which, in spite of their robbery, tend to leave a sufficient surplus for the tillers of the soil, so that it does not pay us to try to exterminate them altogether. But when some pest, that has an enormous power of self multiplication, attacks our total food crop we must consider this a great calamity. In human society, in normal circumstances, there are many causes that make for wastage, yet it does not cost us much to ignore them. But today the blight that has fallen upon our social life and its resources is disastrous because it is not restricted within reasonable limits. This is an epidemic of voracity that has infected the total area of civilization. We all claim our right, and freedom, to be extravagant in our enjoyment if we can afford it. Not to be able to waste as much upon myself as my rich neighbour does merely proves a poverty in myself of which I am ashamed, and against which my women folk, and other parasites, naturally cherish their own grievance. Ours is a society in which, through its tyrannical standard of respectability, all the members are goading each other to spoil themselves to the utmost limit of their capacity. There is a continual screwing up of the ideal level of convenience and comfort, the increase in which is proportionately less than the energy it consumes. The very shriek of advertisement itself, which constantly accompanies the progress of unlimited production, involves the squandering of an immense quantity of material and of life force which merely helps to swell the sweepings of time. Civilization today caters for a whole population of gluttons. An intemperance, which

could safely have been tolerated in a few, has spread its contagion to the multitude. This universal greed, which now infects us all, is the cause of every kind of meanness, of cruelty and of lies in politics and commerce, and vitiates the whole human atmosphere. A civilization, which has attained such an unnatural appetite, must, for its continuing existence, depend upon numberless victims. These are being sought in those parts of the world where human flesh is cheap. In Asia and Africa a bartering goes on through which the future hope and happiness of entire peoples is sold for the sake of providing some fastidious fashion with an endless supply of respectable rubbish.

The consequence of such a material and moral drain is made evident when one studies the condition manifested in the grossness of our cities and the physical and mental anaemia of the villages almost everywhere in the world. For cities inevitably have become important. The city represents energy and materials concentrated for the satisfaction of an exaggerated appetite, and this concentration is considered to be a symptom of civilization. The devouring process of such an abnormality cannot be carried on unless certain parts of the social body conspire and organize to feed upon the whole. This is suicidal; but, before a gradual degeneracy ends in death, the disproportionate enlargement of the particular portion looks formidably great. It conceals the starved pallor of the entire body. The illusion of wealth becomes evident because certain portions grow large on their robbery of the whole.

A living relationship, in a physical or in a social body, depends upon sympathetic collaboration and helpfulness between the various individual organs or members. When a perfect balance of interchange begins to operate, a consciousness of unity develops that is no longer easy to obstruct. The resulting health or wealth are both secondary to this sense of unity which is the ultimate end and aim, and a creation in its own right. Whenever some sectarian ambition for power establishes a dominating position in life's republic, the sense of unity, which can only be generated and maintained by a perfect rhythm of reciprocity between the parts is bound to be disturbed. In a society where the greed of an individual or of a group is allowed to grow uncontrolled, and is encouraged or even applauded by the populace, democracy, as it is termed in the West, cannot be truly realized. In such an atmosphere a constant struggle goes on among individuals to capture public organizations for the satisfaction of their own personal ambition. Thus democracy becomes like an elephant whose one purpose in life is to give joy rides to the clever and to the rich. The organs of information and expression, through which opinions are manufactured, and the machinery of administration, are openly or secretly manipulated by the prosperous few, by those who have been compared to the camel which can never pass through the needle's eye, that narrow gate that leads to the kingdom of ideals. Such a society necessarily becomes inhospitable, suspicious, and callous towards those who preach their faith in ideals, in spiritual freedom. In such a society people become intoxicated by the constant stimulation of what they are told is progress, like the man for whom wine has a greater attraction than food.

Villages are like woman. In their keep is the cradle of the race. They are nearer to nature than the towns and are therefore in closer touch with the fountain of life. They have the atmosphere which possesses a natural power of healing. Like woman they provide people with their elemental needs, with food and joy, with the simple poetry of life and with those ceremonies of beauty which the village spontaneously produces and in which she finds delight. But when constant strain is put upon her through the extortionate claims of ambition, when her resources are exploited through the excessive stimulus of temptation, then she becomes poor in life. Her mind becomes dull and uncreative; and, from her time-honoured position as the wedded partner of the city, she is degraded to that of maid servant. The city, in its intense egotism and pride, remains blissfully unconscious of the devastation it is continuously spreading within the village, the source and origin of its own life, health and joy.

True happiness is not at all expensive. It depends upon that natural spring of beauty and of life, harmony of relationship. Ambition pursues its own path of self-seeking by breaking this bond of harmony, digging gaps, creating dissension. Selfish ambition feels no hesitation in trampling under foot the whole harvest field, which is for all, in order to snatch away in haste that portion which it craves. Being wasteful it remains disruptive of social life and the greatest enemy of civilization.

In India we had a family system of our own, large and complex, each family a miniature society in itself. I do not wish to discuss the question of its desirability, but its rapid decay in the present day clearly points out the nature and process of the principle of destruction which is at work in modern civilization. When life was simple, needs normal, when selfish passions were under control, such a domestic life was perfectly natural and truly productive of happiness. The family resources were sufficient for all. Claims from one or more individuals of that family were never excessive. But such a group can never survive if the personal ambition of a single member begins separately to clamour for a great deal more than is absolutely necessary for him. When the determination to augment private possession, and to enjoy exclusive advantage, runs ahead of the common good and of general happiness, the bond of harmony, which is the bond of creation, must give way and brothers must separate nay even become enemies.

This passion of greed that rages in the heart of our present civilization, like a volcanic flame of fire, is constantly struggling to erupt in individual bloatedness. Such eruptions must disturb man's creative mind. The flow of production which gushes from the cracks rent in society gives the impression of a hugely indefinite gain. We forget that the spirit of creation can only evolve out of our own inner abundance and so add to our true wealth. A sudden increase in the flow of production of things tends to consume our resources and requires us to build new storehouses. Our needs, therefore, which stimulate this increasing flow, must begin to observe the limitation of normal demand. If we go on stoking our demands into bigger and bigger flames the

conflagration that results will no doubt, dazzle our sight, but its splendour will leave on the debit side only a black heap of charred remains. When our wants are moderate, the rations we each claim do not exhaust the common store of nature and the pace of their restoration does not fall hopelessly behind that of our consumption. This moderation leaves us leisure to cultivate happiness, that happiness which is the artist soul of the human world, and which can create beauty of form and rhythm of life. But man today forgets that the divinity within him is revealed by the halo of this happiness. The Germany of the period of Goethe was considered to be poverty stricken by the Germany of the period of Bismarck. Possibly the standard of civilization, illuminated by the mind of Plato or by the life of the Emperor Asoka, is underrated by the proud children of modern times who compare former days with the present age of progress, an age dominated by millionaires, diplomats and war lords. Many things that are of common use today were absolutely lacking in those days. But are the people that lived then to be pitied by the young of our day who enjoy so much more from the printing press but so much less from the mind?

I often imagine that the moon, being smaller in size than the earth, produced the condition for life to be born on her soil earlier than was possible on the soil of her companion. Once she too perhaps had her constant festival of colour, of music and of movement; her store-house was perpetually replenished with food for her children. Then in course of time some race was born to her that was gifted with a furious energy of intelligence, and that began greedily to devour its own surroundings. It produced beings who, because of the excess of their animal spirit, coupled with intellect and imagination, failed to realize that the mere process of addition did not create fulfilment; that mere size of acquisition did not produce happiness; that greater velocity of movement did not necessarily constitute progress and that change could only have meaning in relation to some clear ideal of completeness. Through machinery of tremendous power this race made such an addition to their natural capacity for gathering and holding, that their career of plunder entirely outstripped nature's power for recuperation. Their profit makers dug big holes in the stored capital of the planet. They created wants which were unnatural and provision for these wants was forcibly extracted from nature. When they had reduced the limited store of material in their immediate surroundings they proceeded to wage furious wars among their different sections, each wanting his own special allotment of the lion's share. In their scramble for the right of self-indulgence they laughed at moral law and took it to be a sign of superiority to be ruthless in the satisfaction each of his own desire. They exhausted the water, cut down the trees, reduced the surface of the planet to a desert, riddled with enormous pits, and made its interior a rifled pocket, emptied of its valuables. At last one day the moon, like a fruit whose pulp had been completely eaten by the insects which it had sheltered, became a hollow shell, a universal grave for the voracious creatures who insisted upon consuming the world into which they had been born. In other

words, they behaved exactly in the way human beings of today are behaving upon this earth, fast exhausting their store of sustenance, not because they must live their normal life, but because they wish to live at a pitch of monstrous excess. Mother Earth has enough for the healthy appetite of her children and something extra for rare cases of abnormality. But she has not nearly sufficient for the sudden growth of a whole world of spoiled and pampered children.

Man has been digging holes into the very foundations not only of his livelihood but of his life. He is now feeding upon his own body. The reckless waste of humanity which ambition produces is best seen in the villages where the light of life is gradually being dimmed, the joy of existence dulled, and the natural bonds of social communion are being snapped every day. It should be our mission to restore the full circulation of life's blood into these martyred limbs of society; to bring to the villagers health and knowledge; a wealth of space in which to live, a wealth of time in which to work, to rest and enjoy mutual respect which will give them dignity; sympathy which will make them realize their kinship with the world of men and not merely their position of subservience.

Streams, lakes and oceans are there on this earth. They exist not for the hoarding of water exclusively each within its own area. They send up the vapour which forms into clouds and helps in a wide distribution of water. Cities have a special function in maintaining wealth and knowledge in concentrated forms of opulence, but this should not be for their own exclusive sake; they should not magnify themselves, but should enrich the entire society. They should be like the lamp post, for the light it supports must transcend its own limits. Such a relationship of mutual benefit between the city and the village remains strong only so long as the spirit of co-operation and self-sacrifice is a living ideal in society as a whole. When some universal temptation overcomes this ideal when some selfish passion finds ascendancy then a gap is formed and widened between them. The mutual relationship between city and village becomes that of exploiter and victim. This is a form of perversity in which the body becomes its own enemy. The termination is death.

We have started in India, in connection with Visva-Bharati, a kind of village work the mission of which is to retard this process of race suicide. If I try to give you details of the work the effort will look small. But we are not afraid of this appearance of smallness, for we have confidence in life. We know that if, as a seed, smallness represents the truth that is in us, it will overcome opposition and conquer space and time. According to us the poverty problem is not so important. It is the problem of unhappiness that is the great problem. The search for wealth which is the synonym for the production and collection of things can make use of men ruthlessly can crush life out of the earth and for a time can flourish. Happiness may not compete with wealth in its list of needed materials, but it is final, it is creative therefore it has its own source of riches within itself. Our object is to try to flood the choked bed of village life with streams of happiness. For this the scholars, the poets, the musicians, the artists as well as the scientists have to collaborate have to offer their contribution.

Otherwise they live like parasites, sucking life from the country people, and giving nothing back to them. Such exploitation gradually exhausts the soil of life, the soil which needs constant replenishing by the return of life to it through the completion of the cycle of receiving and giving back.

The writer of the following paper, who was in charge of the rural work in Visva-Bharati, forcibly drew our attention to this subject and made it clear to us that the civilization which allows its one part to exploit the rest without making any return is merely cheating itself into bankruptcy. It is like the foolish young man, who suddenly inheriting his father's business, steals his own capital and spends it in a magnificent display of extravagance. He dazzles the imagination of the onlookers, he gains applause from his associates in his dissipation, he becomes the most envied man in his neighbourhood till the morning when he wakes up, in surprise, to a state of complete indigence. Most of us who try to deal with the poverty problem think of nothing else but of a greater intensive effort of production, forgetting that this only means a greater exhaustion of materials as well as of humanity, and this means giving a still better opportunity for profit to the few at the cost of the many. But it is food which nourishes and not money. It is fullness of life which makes us happy and not fullness of purse. Multiplying materials intensifies the inequality between those who have and those who have not. This is the worst wound from which the social body can suffer. It is a wound through which the body is bled to death!

1922

ZOROASTRIAN HYMNS

The most important of all outstanding facts of Iranian history is the religious reform brought about by Zarathushtra. He was the first man we know who gave a definitely moral character and direction to religion, and at the same time preached the doctrine of monotheism, which offered an eternal foundation of reality of goodness as an ideal of perfection. All religions of the primitive type try to keep men bound with regulations of external observances. These, no doubt, have the hypnotic effect of vaguely suggesting a realm of right and wrong; but the dimness of their light produces phantasms leaving men to aberrations. Zarathushtra was the greatest of all the pioneer prophets who showed the path of freedom to men, the freedom of moral choice, the freedom from blind obedience to unmeaning injunctions, freedom from the multiplicity of shrines which draw our worship away from the single-minded chastity of devotion. To most of us it sounds like a truism today when we are told that the moral goodness of a deed comes from the goodness of intention. But it is a truth which once came to a man like a revelation of light in the darkness and has not yet reached all the obscure corners of humanity. There

are men we still see around us who fearfully follow, hoping thereby to gain merit, the path of blind formalisms, which have no living moral source in the mind. This will make us understand the greatness of Zarathushtra. Though surrounded by believers in magical rites, he proclaimed in those dark days of unreason, that religion has its truth in its moral significance, not in external practices of imaginary value; that it is to uphold man in his life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

The outer expression of truth reaches its white light of simplicity through its inner realization. True simplicity is the physiognomy of perfection. In the primitive stage of spiritual growth, when man is dimly aware of the mystery of the infinite in his life and the world, when he does not fully know the inward character of his relationship with this truth, his first feeling is either that of dread or of a greed of gain. This drives him into wild exaggeration in worship, into frenzied convulsion of ceremonialism. But in Zarathushtra's teachings, which are best reflected in his Gathas, we have hardly any mention of the ritualism of worship. Conduct and its moral motives, such as Vohumano, Asha and Aramaiti, have received almost the sole attention in them.

The orthodox Persian form of worship in ancient Iran included animal sacrifices and offering of *haoma* to the *daevas*. That all this should be discountenanced by Zarathushtra not only shows his courage, but the strength of his realization of the Supreme Being as Spirit. We are told that it has been mentioned by Plutarch: 'Zarathushtra taught the Persians to sacrifice to Ahura Mazda "vows and thanksgivings." ' The distance between faith in the efficacy of blood-stained magical rites and cultivation of moral and spiritual deals as the true form of worship is immense. It is amazing to see how Zarathushtra was the first among men who crossed this distance with a certainty of realization which imparted such a fervour of faith in his life and his words. The truth which filled his mind was not a thing borrowed from books or received from teachers. He did not come to it by following a prescribed path of tradition. It flashed upon him as an illumination of his entire life, almost like a communication to his personal self, and he proclaimed the utmost immediacy of his knowledge in these words:

> When I conceived of Thee, O Mazda, as the very First and the Last, as the most Adorable One, as the Father of Good Thought, as the Creator of Truth and Right, as the Lord Judge of our actions in life, then I made a place for Thee in my very eyes.—Yasna, 31–8. (Translation by D.J. Irani.)

It was the direct stirring of his soul which made him say:

> Thus do I announce the Greatest of all. I weave my songs of praise for Him through Truth, helpful and beneficent to all that live. Let Ahura Mazda listen to them with His Holy Spirit, for the Good Mind instructed me to adore Him; by His Wisdom let Him teach me about what is best.—Yasna, 45–6.

The truth which is not reached through the analytical process of reasoning, and does not depend for proof on some corroboration of outward

facts, or the prevalent faith and practice of the people—the truth, which comes like an inspiration out of context with its surroundings, brings with it an assurance that it has been sent from a divine source of wisdom; that the individual who has received it is specially chosen and therefore has his responsibility as the messenger of God. Zarathushtra felt this sacredness of his mission and believed himself to be the direct medium of communication of Divine Truth.

So long as man deals with his God as the dispenser of benefits to the worshipper, who knows the secret of propitiating him, he tries to keep him for his own self or for the tribe to which he belongs. But directly the moral or spiritual nature of God is apprehended, this knowledge is thrown open to all humanity; and then the idea of God, which once gave unity only to a special people, transcends limitations of race and gathers together all human beings within one spiritual circle of union. Zarathushtra was the first prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of the tribal God, the God of a chosen people, and offered it to the universal man. This is a great fact in the history of religion. The Master said, when the enlightenment came to him:

> Verily I believe Thee, O Ahura Mazda, to be the Supreme Benevolent Providence, when Sraosha came to me with the Good Mind, when first I received and became wise with Thy words! And though the task be difficult, though woe may come to me, I shall proclaim to all mankind Thy message, which Thou declarest to be the best.—Yasna, 43–11.

He prays to Mazda:

> This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura, the religion that is best for all mankind—the religion, based on truth, which should prosper all that is mine, the religion which establishes our actions in order and justice by the Divine Songs of Perfect Piety, which has, for its intelligent desire of desires, the desire for Thee, O Mazda!—Yasna, 44–10.

With the undoubted assurance and hope of one who has got a direct vision of Truth he speaks to the world:

> Hearken unto me, Ye, who come from far and near! Listen, for I shall speak forth now; ponder well over all things, weigh my words with care and clear thought. Never shall the false teacher destroy this world for a second time; for his tongue stands mute, his creed exposed.—Yasna, 45–1.

I think it can be said without doubt that such a high conception of religion, uttered in such a clear note of affirmation, with a sure conviction that it is a truth of the ultimate ideal of perfection which must be revealed to all humanity, even at the cost of martyrdom, is unique in the history of religion belonging to such a remote dawn of civilization.

There was a time when along with other Aryan peoples the Persians also worshipped the elemental gods of nature, on whose favour they depended for

the good things of life. But such favour was not to be won by any moral duty performed or by any service of love. In fact, it was the crude beginning of the scientific spirit trying to unlock the hidden sources of power in nature. But through it all there must have been some current of deeper desire which constantly contradicted the cult of power and indicated a world of inner good infinitely more precious than material gain. Its voice was not strong at first, nor was it heeded by the majority of the people; but its influence, like the life within the seed, was silently working. Then comes the great teacher; and in his life and mind the hidden fire of truth suddenly bursts out in a flame. The best in the people works for long obscure ages in hints and whispers till it finds its voice, which can never again be silenced. For that voice becomes the voice of mankind, no longer confined to a particular time or people. It works across intervals of silence and oblivion, depression and defeat, and comes out again and again with its conquering call. It is a call to the fighter—the fighter against untruth—against all that lures away man's spirit from its high mission of freedom into the meshes of materialism. And Zarathushtra's voice is still a living voice, not a mere matter of academic interest for historical scholars who deal with the dead facts of the past. It is not a voice which is only to guide a small community of men in the daily details of their life. For have we not seen that Zarathushtra was the first of all teachers who, in his religious teachings, sent his words to all human races across the distance of space and time? He was not like a man who by some chance of friction had lighted a lamp, and knowing that it could not be shared by all, secured it with a miser's care for his own domestic use. But he was the watcher in the night, who stood on the lonely peak facing the East and broke out singing the poems of light to the sleeping world when the sun came out on the brim of the horizon. He declared that the sun of truth is for all, that its light is to unite the far and the near. Such a message always arouses the antagonism of those whose habits have become nocturnal, whose vested interest is in the darkness. And there was a bitter fight in the lifetime of the prophet between his followers and others who were addicted to the ceremonies that had tradition on their side and not truth.

We are told that 'Zarathushtra was descended from a kingly family,' and also that the first converts to his doctrines were of the ruling caste. But the priesthood, 'the Kavis and the Karapans, often succeeded in bringing the rulers over to their side.' So we find that, in this fight, the princes of the land divided themselves into two opposite parties, as we find in India in the Kurukshetra war. 'With the princes have the Kavis and the Karapans united, in order to corrupt man by their evil deeds.' Among the princes that stood against Zarathushtra, as his enemies, the mighty Bendva might be included, who is mentioned in Yasna, xlix, 1–2. From the context we may surmise that he stood on the side of the infidels. A family or a race of princely blood were probably the Grehma (Yasna, xxxii, 12–14). Regarding them it is said that they 'having allied with the Kavis and the Karapans, have established their power in order to overpower the prophet and his partisans. In fact, the opposition between the pious and the impious, the believers and the unbelievers, seem

very often to have led to open combat. The prophet prays to Ahura that he may grant victory to his own, when both the armies rush together in combat, whereby they can cause defeat among the wicked, and procure for them strife and trouble.'

There is evidence in our Indian legends that in ancient India also there have been fights between the representatives of the orthodox faith and the Kshatriyas, who, owing to their own special vocation, had a comparative freedom of mind about the religion of external observances. The proofs are strong enough to lead us to believe that the monotheistic religious movement had its origin and principal support in the kingly caste of those days, though a great number of them fought to oppose it.

I have discussed in another place the growth in ancient India of the moral and spiritual element in her religion which had accompanied the Indian Aryan people from the time of the Indo-Iranian age, showing how the struggle with its antagonistic force has continued all through the history of India. I have shown how the revolution which accompanied the teachings of Zarathushtra, breaking out into severe fights, had its close analogy in the religious revolution in India whose ideals are still preserved in the Bhagavadgita.

It is interesting to note that the growth of the same ideal in the same race in different geographical situations has produced results that, in spite of their unity, have some aspect of difference. The Iranian monotheism is more ethical, while the Indian is more metaphysical in its character. Such a difference in their respective spiritual developments was owing, no doubt, to the more active vigour of life in the old Persians and the contemplative quietude of mind in the Indians. This distinction in the latter arises in a great measure out of the climatic conditions of the country, the easy fertility of the soil and the great stretch of plains in Northern India affording no constant obstacles in physical nature to be daily overcome by man, while the climate of Persia is more bracing and the surface of the soil more rugged. The Zoroastrian ideal has accepted the challenge of the principle of evil and has enlisted itself in the fight on the side of Ahura Mazda, the great, the good, the wise. In India, although the ethical side is not absent, the emphasis has been more strongly laid on subjective realization through a stoical suppression of desire, and the attainment of a perfect equanimity of mind by cultivating indifference to all causes of joy and sorrow. Here the idea, over which the minds of men brooded for ages, in an introspective intensity of silence, was that man as a spiritual being had to realize the truth by breaking through his sheath of self. All the desires and feelings that limit has being are keeping him shut in from the region of spiritual freedom.

In man the spirit of creation is waiting to find its ultimate release in an ineffable illumination of Truth. The aspiration of India is for attaining the infinite in the spirit of man. On the other hand, as I have said before, the ideal of Zoroastrian Persia is distinctly ethical. It sends its call to men to work together with the Eternal Spirit of Good in spreading and maintaining Kshatra, the Kingdom of Righteousness, against all attacks of evil. This ideal

gives us our place as collaborators with God in distributing His blessings over the world.

> Clear is this all to the man of wisdom as to the man who carefully thinks; he who upholds Truth with all the might of his power, he who upholds Truth the utmost in his word and deed, he, indeed, is thy most valued helper, O Mazda Ahura!—Yasna, 31,-22.

It is, in fact, of supreme moment to us that the human world is in an incessant state of war between that which will save us and that which will drag us into the abyss of disaster. Our one hope lies in the fact that Ahura Mazda is on our side if we choose the right course. The law of warfare is severe in its character; it allows no compromise. 'None of you,' says Zarathushtra, 'shall find the doctrine and precepts of the wicked; because thereby he will bring grief and death in his house and village, in his land and people! No, grip your sword and cut them down!'—Yasna, xxxi, 18.

Such a relentless attitude of fight reminds us of the Old Testament spirit. The active heroic aspect of this religion reflects the character of the people themselves, who later on spread their conquests far and wide and built up great empires by the might of their sword. They accepted this world in all seriousness. They had zest in life and confidence in their own strength. They belonged to the western half of Asia, and their great influence travelled through the neighbouring civilization of India and towards the Western Continent. Their ideal was the ideal of the fighter. By the force of their will and deed of sacrifice they were to conquer *haurvatat*, welfare in this world, and *ameratat*, immortality in the other. This is the best ideal of the West, the great truth of fight.For Paradise has to be gained through conquest. That sacred task is for the heroes, who are to take the right side in the battle and the right weapons.

1924

THE CASE FOR INDIA

WE HAVE RECENTLY heard a proposal to segregate the Indian population in some Christian Commonwealth of South Africa. It is a plan to smother their self-respect under the cover of political untouchability.

India has been suffering from such segregation of her personality for a long period of foreign subjection. She is exiled in a dimness of insignificance. Not only is she ostracized by her rulers from human relationships with themselves, but under a prolonged primitive condition of indecorous indigence she is ignored by the community of nations. This is the worst calamity that can happen to any country when before the modern lidless gaze of publicity all peoples are exposed to each other's view. If India were

completely concealed and forgotten she could bear it much more easily than now when she is pilloried before the world public in her unkempt poverty, illiteracy, fierce stupidity of fanaticism and all variety of ragged wretchedness which inevitably follows the lack of education and negligence from an unsympathetic overlordship.

It is easy to be unjust to those whose existence is blurred by privations of all kinds, who are made inexpressive, inarticulate. There can be no question that the minds of the vast masses in India remain muffled under an appalling ignorance and destitution, and this remediable fact is too often exploited in order to classify them as eternal victims to others whose prosperity must be maintained by a perpetual parasitism upon these repressed races. I have more than once had the occasion to notice an outburst of irritation even from some Americans at the idea of India ever dreaming of political severance of British connection. It costs them nothing to think that we Indians are innately and immutably different from themselves and that it would be annoyingly absurd for us to aspire after the same human rights for which they once had fought against their own brothers. Such an attitude of contempt we helplessly bear through our suppressed opportunity of self-expression, because we have been forced too long to dwell fettered in an oppressively narrow cell of closed prospects.

I do not wish to go into details about the elementary needs of our people which it is the moral obligation of a civilized government to provide, the needs of adequate education, sanitation, medical help and economic well-being. I take this opportunity merely to emphasize the greatest of all our needs, which is to remind ourselves and others that this universal degradation in India is not inevitably founded upon an inborn incapacity of the race. The dark facts of our bankruptcy are evident to any casual visitor, but the truth which is permanent in the spirit of the people must be explored in the history of our past. A critical search should be made to find out the nature of the accidents that are responsible for the present condition of the country which once had the dangerous reputation of a fabulous wealth attracting round her treasure-house adventurers from distant shores.

This is what Will Durant has taken the trouble to attempt in his book *The Case for India*. Once when travelling meant real trouble strange countries gradually yielded themselves to be properly known. The comfortable method of touring today is like hastily gorging one's meals without mastication, ignoring the necessary process of taste and digestion. Geographical experiences have become thinned into shadow pictures and the modern means of publicity have enabled the purveyors of superficial unrealities to ply their trade with too great ease.

But our author has taken the trouble to know. The miserable condition of the country he has seen with his own eyes; but, what is rare with most tourists, he has explored the history of our misfortune. Will Durant has treated us with the respect due to human beings, acknowledging our right to serious consideration. This has come to me as a surprise, for such courtesy is extremely

rare today to those people who have not the power to make themselves obnoxious. When I was young, we had a romantic vision of the West, which still revealed its soul in the last glow of the illumination of the French revolution. It was the chivalrous West which trained the enthusiasm of its knights errant ready to take upon themselves the cause of the oppressed, of those who suffered from the miserliness of their fate. And we felt certain that the special mission of the Western civilization was to bring emancipation of all kinds to all races in the world. Though the West came to our share as a cunning tradesman, it brought with it also the voice of Burke and a literature whose background was majestic and which claimed justice for all humanity. The atmosphere of that century was generous with the young hope of man. But the tradesman has triumphed at last and the spirit of chivalry loudly laughed to extinction. From this inhospitable age of the overgrown national worldliness, which everywhere outside Soviet Russia is in idolatrous awe of material power we have long ceased to expect justice, we of an alien continent brought to the altar of power as sacrifice. And I repeat once again that I was surprised when I noticed in Will Durant's book a poignant note of pain at the suffering and indignity of the people who are not his kindred, an indignant desire to be just to the defeated race whose own voice is low within the solitary cell of its obscurity. I know that the author will have a small chance of reward in popularity from his readers and his book may even run the risk of being proscribed to us, not having the indecency to deal with an unwholesome calumny against the people who are already humiliated by their own evil fortune. But he, I am sure, has his noble compensation in upholding the best tradition of the West in its championship of freedom and fair play. I am specially thankful to him for the service he has rendered to the English nation by largely quoting from its own members the condemnation of British policy where it has cruelly betrayed its responsibility to India; for after my recent disillusionment I sadly need confirmation of the faith I still wish to maintain in the raw magnanimity of soul in those who are the true representatives of this great race.

1931

VOICELESS INDIA

IN HER *Voiceless India,* Miss Emerson has amply proved that she has her own natural right of a sensitive mind to come to a people who happen to be foreign to her and in judging whom she has done herself justice. The bond of kinship that prevails within a community not only protects it from wanton cruelty and injustice from inside but is the natural nerve channel through which we directly feel our own race in its entirety. But the stranger from outside can easily be unjust, owing to the fact that he has not to pay for his conduct in his

own feeling and be checked by that deeper sensibility which goes directly beyond the miscellany of facts into the heart of a living unity. And for the sake of his own benefit and others' safety he must bring with him his inner light of imagination, so that he may feel truth and not merely know facts. It is fully evident that Miss Emerson is gifted with this rare faculty, that she has realized a complete vision of an alien life by making it her own.

It is a very hard trial for a Western woman to have to spend long lonely months in an environment where most things conspire to hurt the modern taste and standard of living. The author of this book did not choose the comfortable method of picking up information from behind a lavish bureaucratic hospitality, under a revolving electric fan, and in an atmosphere of ready-made official opinions. For the materials of the present book she did not move about among the upper circle of the modern sophisticated India where communication was through her own language and tendencies of mind were not wholly unfamiliar to her. She boldly took it upon herself unaided to enter a region of our life, all but unexplored by the Western tourists, which had the one great advantage, in spite of its difficulties, that it offered no other path open to the writer but that of sharing the life of the people. In fact, in this adventure of hers she followed the examples of the true born travellers of the golden age of travelling when the pilgrims across the seas and mountains did not carry with them their own mental and physical habits—the barricading aloofness of their own race and culture.

And I can easily imagine what the author had to pay for her experience, not in money but in a part of her life itself. The constant toll that a pitiless climate exacts from our vitality for the barest privilege of living, the mean tyrannies of the tropics that often cause desperate discomforts and, what is worse, a perpetual state of subconscious irritation in our mind, are enough provocation for a foreigner to make him unreasonably vengeful in his judgment and language. There is no sign of that in Miss Emerson's writings, not even of a temptation to be superciliously funny at any awkwardness of the simple village folk among whom she lived. These villages had no allurements of the romantic India, incomprehensibly mystic in her ritualism, or ineffably grand in her relics and ruins. The background of life they had was dull and drab, with no lurid fascination of vice so important for making its detailed descriptions gratifying to some readers in their search for a vicarious enjoyment under the cover of moral indignation. All this has given an opportunity to disclose the personality of the writer herself, not only through the intellectual sanity displayed in this book, but, what is more precious, in her depth of human sympathy.

She never idealised, not even for the sake of literary flourishes, any aspects of the village life to which she was so intimately close. She never minimised the primitive crudities of its features, things that were stupid, ungainly, superstitious, or even evil in their moral ugliness, but her narration, in spite of its unmitigated truth, never hurts, because all through it runs the gracious touch of the woman, the pure instinct of sympathy which, while it

bares and handles the sores, is yet tender to them. And these unfortunate Indian villages, deserted by their own capable men, neglected with scant notice by their politicians, cruelly ignored by their government, dumbly suffering unspeakable miseries, putting all the blame upon their inexorable fate, bent down to the dust by the load of indignities, deprived of education, sanitary or medical help, living upon a pitifully meagre ration of food that has hardly any nutrition, and a scant supply of water full of microbic menace—they need a true woman's heart to give them voice, for they are like children in their utter helplessness disowned by their parents.

What Miss Emerson has discovered concerning the poverty of the Indian village, causing it to sink down under the weight of a land tax too heavy to be borne, has been openly acknowledged, to their credit, by a small band of Indian civilians who have been obliged to administer the system which they saw actually crushing the poor. Sir William Hunter said many years ago: 'The Government assessment does not leave enough food to the cultivator to support himself and his family throughout the year.' Sir Henry Cotton and Sir William Wedderburn, both high officials, have confessed the same unpalatable truth. More recently still, Mr C.J. O'Donnel, who held in his own day one of the chief administrative positions in the Government of India, has declared: "It makes little difference to three hundred million Indian peasants what the Simon Commission may recommend, but I fear that the *ryot* will remain 'the most pathetic figure in the British Empire'; for 'his masters have ever been unjust to him, and Christendom will have one more failure to its discredit.'"

I feel personally grateful to Miss Emerson for the masterly picture she has drawn of our pathetic village life, so vivid and yet sober in its colour—the honest colour of truth; for I myself have spent some part of my youth in its neighbourhood and have made it my mission with all my inadequate individual resources to befriend them who are friendless, who are eternal tenants in an extortionate world having nothing of their own.

1930

CHRIST

DEAR CHARLIE,

I have read your book on Christ. It made me think. The mode of self-expression in a Christian life is in love which works, in that of a Hindu it is in love which contemplates, enjoys the spiritual emotion as an end in itself. The attitude of mind that realizes the super-human in a human setting has rendered a great service to civilization, just as its perversion has been the cause of an awful and widespread mischief. You know, how all through my life, my idea of the divine has concentrated in Man the Eternal and I find that in your own religious experience. You have the same idea centred in a concrete

historic personality. Evidently it strongly helps you in the realization of perfection in your life and it must be a source of unfailing consolation to you to be able to feel in your constant love a divine comradeship in Christ. The mental and physical energy stored up for ages in your western constitution urges you to activities that are saved from aberration when they are related to a living centre of Truth. Instances of heroic devotion and unselfish sacrifice springing from that source are most valuable for us in order to keep us firm in the faith in the abiding truth in the immortal. And I know you have been of help to your fellow beings not merely for some individual benefits that you may have rendered them but for a direct inspiration that gives us certainly of the ultimate greatness of Man.

With love.

1932

REBEL INDIA

'REBEL INDIA' IS an eminently honest book which can only be written by a type of Englishman with whom we are least familiar in India. I cannot doubt that there must be a number of such men among those who have made it their task to rule this country or are employed here in various other capacities. I only wish, for the sake of their own nation, that such individuals could be clearly discerned by us through the unhuman atmosphere which densely envelops them, blurring their features into a herd uniformity.

During my last visit in England I was assured by a responsible member of Parliament that the Englishman may be wanting in imagination, but it should never be doubted that he is honest. I am sure he was right, but it is necessary, specially in the present moment, that this fact should be completely evident to us who can hardly have opportunity of studying this people in their natural environment. It is needless to say that the quality of honesty undergoes its hardest trial where self-interest is concerned not merely that of an individual but of one's own nation. The tremendous pressure of expediency in the cause of nationalism too often effects deviation of character from the moral orbit which an honourable man follows in all other calls of life even at the risk of hurt and loss.

Generally speaking, the background of an Englishman's activities in India in his pursuit of personal gain or administration of the country, intimately represents his national self-interest, which very often does not coincide with the vital interest of the land of his exile. Lacking most other incentives and outlets for his energy in the direction of a great social life, multitudinous in its ideals and claims, he intensely cultivates an imperialistic worldliness which can never be honest and just in its relation to those whom it must exploit for its maintenance. Every individual Englishman in India, be

he a planter, station master, shop assistant, dentist or hotel keeper, head clerk of a merchant office, whatever may be his character, culture and capacity, cannot help being strongly obsessed by a sense of almost personal ownership with regard to India. As an Englishman he meets everywhere in this country with special concession and consideration to which he is not accustomed among his own people and which he can never naturally claim for any uncommon gift of his own. Everything in India every moment encourages in him a dangerously exaggerated consciousness of superiority and of political overlordship merely owing to the accident of his birth. No wonder that it completely damages the mind and character of the average man who belongs to the vast majority of the mediocre. It was in 1878 that I first came to England, and I remember how I was often told by my English friends that the retired Anglo-Indians as a rule were intolerable. Evidently in those days the normal type of Englishman was fundamentally different from those who had eaten India's salt for any length of time. But in the meanwhile India has been taking her revenge and gradually saturating the atmosphere of English character with the noxious exhalations that rise from unresisting humiliation of humanity.

And therefore what surprises me in this book is the perfect honesty of the author in his description and discussion of things he has noticed during his tour in India, the unpleasant sights and happenings that were not creditable to his own people.

The unnatural relation of the race of the rulers to that of the ruled, representing the subjection of an entire country made profitable to an entire nation living aloof across an enormous distance, must kill moral probity because it kills human sympathy.

Very few individuals can be expected to resist the moral contamination which such imperialistic parasitism must engender and nowhere is the tragedy of fine minds succumbing to the insidious poison of racial arrogance made more evident than amongst the Englishman in India whose self-lowered prestige must at all costs be preserved by military power. One waits in vain therefore for a voice of protest from this privileged community against the unsympathetic treatment that is being meted out in their name and with their cognizance to a people whom they know to be defenceless and whose most pitifully human claims must needs be ignored by the impersonal spirit of law and order. Moral integrity with regard to its hapless victims is an unnecessary item in the make up of a commercial policy whose ambition is to reap dividends with the maximum of speed and comfort.

'Rebel India,' I repeat, is an honest book. Reading it I feel encouraged to hope that individual Englishman in our land will emulate his attitude of sober judgment and, no matter how inconvenient it may be to do so, dare face facts as they really are today in India.

1933

PREFACE TO 'DELIVERANCE'

THE EARLY EPOCH of Bengali prose suggests its parallel in the beginning of the biological age on this earth when its animal creations were cumbersome in their gait, lacking in a rhythm submissive to life. Though the time is not remote, yet it seems to us belonging almost to a pre-historic period of evolution when Bengali prose painfully struggled on with its adynamic grammar and vocabulary containing words that were mostly inert and colourless. Our own growing intimacy with the modern European mind and its manner of expression reacted upon our language giving it more and more freedom of movement and pliancy in its functions. During a remarkably rapid course of self-discovery it has developed the courage to be able to cross the orthodox enclosure of a pseudoclassical form of literature rigid in its ceremonialism. This freedom has brought our fiction close to the everyday life of the people, a large section of which was formerly shunned as untouchable in our domain of culture. The latest of the leaders who, through this path of liberation, has guided Bengali novels nearer to the spirit of modern world literature is Saratchandra Chatterji. He has imparted a new power to our language and in his stories has shed the light of a fresh vision upon the too familiar region of Bengal's heart, revealing the living significance of the obscure trifles in people's personality. He has achieved the best reward of a novelist: he has completely won the hearts of Bengali readers.

1940

WHEN PEACOCKS CALLED

IN AN AGE of fratricide, aided by intellectual dehumanization in large areas of the world, it is difficult to restore the calm air so necessary for the realization of great human ideals. Hilda Seligman has chosen in her book to reveal the organization side of a great humanism, which came with King Asoka of India. My good thoughts go with the author in her venture to present ancient India through its message which has a perennially modern significance.

1940

IV

CONVERSATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

MARGUERITE WILKINSON AND TAGORE

'I HAVE HEARD that your poems are often sung, and chanted by the people of your country', said I, 'that is true, is it not?'

'Yes', he (Tagore) said, 'it is true. Our people love poetry. I know villagers in my neighbourhood, who after their day's work in the field, gather under the stars before some hut and sing in chorus till midnight devotional songs belonging to the best lyrical literature of their language.'

'If the people enjoy singing your poems is it because they are like folk poetry?'

'Some of my poems are like folk poetry,' said Dr. Tagore, 'but some are in the romantic style and some in the classical style.'

'The music that goes with them is your own music, is it not?'

'Yes.'

'Can you tell me something about it?'

'It is difficult to do that because it is not at all like your Western music. When I first went to England I was taken to hear a great singer—she had been in opera. I could not understand why people found her singing beautiful. To me it was strange—imitative—I did not like it. But I said to myself, 'If so many people think it is beautiful, and such intelligent people, I will try to understand.' And so I studied the Western music and I have found much to admire in it. But your people will not study our music. When they come to India and do not like it at once they will not try to understand. . .'

I could readily believe that the Americans with money enough to travel to India would not be the ones to stop and study the music or art of Bengal long and faithfully. Our intolerance, where it existed in this connection, might readily be the result of the pressure of our practical occidental lives upon us, or of our breathless haste. Just why English musicians should not be interested in Indian music I do not know.

'When you make a poem and music for it do you make the verbal and musical melodies together? Or does the music come first, so that you fit words to it, or the words, so that you fit music to them?'

'Sometimes I make the words first and then put music with them later. Sometimes I make a melody first and then put words with it. Sometimes the music is subordinated to the words. Sometimes the words are subordinated to music.'

'How does this method affect your rhythms?'

'They are always changed. Anything new added always changes what was before. It is like colour added to the lines of a picture. When you add melody to words the rhythm is changed.'

'Yet you do not change the emotional key—a love song remains in the same mood, or a lament for a dead friend retains the spirit of sorrow even when the new element is added.'

Dr. Tagore gave assent at once.

'The new thing that is added—it is not alien,' he said.

'You believe, then, that either in a poem or in a song, rhythm always means something, is always intimately related to the emotion expressed?'

Dr. Tagore seemed to think that rhythm would have no value otherwise.

'Where', I asked him, 'do the poets of your country find their rhythms? Do they get them out of rhetorics?'

He laughed gently and shook his head.

'Before me', he said, 'they went much to the rhetorics. I have set them free.'

Where do your own rhythms come from?'

'From the subconscious' he said, 'like a spring bubbling out of the earth.'

'Will you tell me something of the kinds of rhythm you have in your language!'

'We have many kinds of rhythm, a great rhythmical variety. Our words have no individual idiosyncrasies, no accent of their own to be respected, as English words have. In that our language is more like French. Many rhythmical bars that are rare or quite impossible in English are common with us. We have a four-syllable bar and five-syllable bar.'

'Where does the verse-accent come?'

'On the first syllable, usually. It is like the ebbing away of the breath, a bar of one of these rhythms—the full breath at the beginning—then the renewal at the beginning of the next bar.'

Dr. Tagore then kindly recited a few lines from one of his poems written with four-syllable to the bar. The rhythmical effect was very beautiful. While he was reciting I noticed that his finger, lying on the table, beat the time of the rests at the end of the line. Evidently the poets of Bengal know that time is time in silence just as much as in sound. At this moment we were interrupted and I went away with the memory of that gently wavering rhythm, 'like the ebbing away of the breath', but clearly marked from bar to bar and line to line, wishing that I could have heard many more of these poems in the language which I did not understand, yet found so clearly musical.

1921

BENEDETTO CROCE AND TAGORE

POET: I am sorry to have troubled you to have come to Rome, but I could not leave Italy without seeing you. I would have been ashamed to have returned to India without meeting you. I did not know you were in Naples, otherwise I would certainly have seen you there.

CROCE: The pleasure is all mine in having been able to come to see you. You do

not know how much I admire your poetry. Not only for its thoughts, but for its sober form—as we Italians call it—its classical form. This is quite different from our ideas of oriental poetry which we usually think of as steeped in fancies.

POET: And I am an admirer of your philosophy and your literary criticism. Your "Poetry and not-Poetry," which I read in English translation, appeared to me as a very concise and yet full treatment of the subject.

CROCE: My idea of divinity is similar to yours: God is not a being amongst beings, but the Being of Beings.

POET: That is exactly my idea.

CROCE: Not to divide the world into two water-tight compartments: material and spiritual, but to see the working of the spirit in the totality of the two,—the idea has found expression in your thoughts: in a perfect form.

POET: I believe your Italian mind is synthetic; you see things in their integral aspect.

CROCE: Italian genius is something mid-way between the French and the German. It possesses the analytic subtlety of the French, and also the comprehensive character, which is sometimes apt to become confused, of the German. The Italian mentality seeks to reach profundity, but at the same time demands clearness.

POET: This is a great asset. If this is so, then your country is the fit place for a synthesis of Western Science and Eastern Philosophy. We look at Italy as a country where something new in the field of culture is developing, and we want to grasp it and take it back with us.

CROCE: That is true. During the twenty years before the war, there was a new cultural movement in Italy. The confusion caused by the world war has, to a certain extent, arrested this development. But I think this temporary suspension, rather than damaging it, may have beneficial results. The scattered seeds will bury themselves in the ground and will render good fruit in the future.

POET: The Western civilization, for which we had one time great reverence, is showing a tendency to give great reverence to the things that are of the outside world. This is a unilateral development and is causing the loss of a good deal of the prestige which it had in the East. The development of elements which have reference to the inner life is also necessary.

CROCE: Yes, it is true, but the external things must not be rejected. They cannot be isolated, they must be permitted by idealism. The most difficult thing is to unite the Oriental and the Occidental attitudes of mind: to look upon ideas as facts and upon facts as ideas.

POET: In the Visva-Bharati in India we are trying to form a centre where the greatest minds of this age can come and meet. I would be happy if you would come once and join us.

CROCE: I sincerely hope it will be possible some day. In the meantime let me take the liberty of sending you my works, but at present I do not wish to trouble you any longer.

1926

ROMAIN ROLLAND AND TAGORE

I VILLENEUVE

THE TALK TURNED to Goethe and European literature of the 18th century. Rolland was speaking enthusiastically about Weimar. He said that in order to catch the spirit of Goethe, one must go to Weimar which retained something of the harmony of Goethe's spirit. Goethe had lived in other places but the inward significance of his life could not be appreciated without visiting Weimar.

Rolland then began speaking about the music of the 18th century. He asked: 'Have you heard anything of Gluck? He lived in the 18th century. Among modern European composers he has the largest amount of what I may call the Greek feeling, retaining in music only what was serene and beautiful, and eliminating with austere severity everything that was superfluous. Before him European music was something like medieval Gothic architecture. It possessed great exuberance of spirit, but was apt to get lost in a mass of details. The reform accomplished by Gluck at the end of the 18th century, just before the outbreak of the French Revolution, was coming back to pure line and pure form. He was a German, or rather a Bohemian, who lived much in France where he was well appreciated.'

TAGORE: I have always felt the immense power of your European music. I love Beethoven and also Bach. I must confess, it takes a good deal of time to understand and thoroughly appreciate the idiom of your music. As a young boy I heard European music being played on the piano; much of it I found attractive, but I could not enter fully into the spirit of the thing. Do the different countries of Europe have peculiar features of their own in their music? For example, has Italian music any special characteristics? Is the general spirit different from that of German music?

ROLLAND: Very different indeed. A good deal of modern European music had originally come from Italy but became completely changed in its development. In the south the music has more beauty, but as you go to the north it becomes more and more complex. In the old Italian music of the 16th century you find delicate lines and shades, and the beauty of melody is prominent; in the north there is more emotion. Among modern composers Puccini has great gifts but lacks in taste, and I think modern Italian music is rather spoiled and extravagant. In old Italy the composer and poet were both seeking for purity.

After some more discussion about music, Tagore said: 'I want to ask you a question. The purpose of art is not to give expression to emotion but to use it for the creation of significant form. Literature is not the direct expression

of any emotion. Emotion only supplies the occasion which makes it possible to bring forth the creative act. A Grecian urn is not the representation of any particular emotion which is at all important: but it gives form to some definite urge of the artist's mind. In European music I find, however, that an attempt is sometimes made to give expression to particular emotions. Is this desirable? Should not music also use emotion as material only, and not as an end in itself?'

ROLLAND: A great musician must always use emotion as substance out of which beautiful forms are created. But in Europe musicians have had such an abundance of good material that they tended to over-emphasise the emotional aspects. A great musician must have poise, for without it his work perishes.

TAGORE: Take the opera *Il Traviata*. Is it not too definite? Does it not try to describe everything in too definite terms?

ROLLAND: Yes, it is a defect of our music, especially since the beginning of the 19th century, after the romantic work of Beethoven was written and particularly after Wagner.

TAGORE: In India we have the other extreme. The singer often takes too much liberty with the music. In pictures and in literature the outward form is fixed, at music requires for its interpretation the human voice; even in instrumental music you have the human hand which is very flexible. The singer must therefore be a true artist and not merely an artisan. In India the composer has to depend a great deal on the finger to make the music complete by his rendering, but unfortunately the singer often overshadows the composer by his own variations.

ROLLAND: This was also the state of affairs in Europe at the time of Handel. In old Italian music, interpretation was left to the singers, the composers always leaving many things indefinite. In the popular comedies of Italy the music given by the composer was simply a kind of sketch. The player improvised, filled in, and often sang extempore, sometimes to the accompaniment of the composer. Every time both songs and music were different, and a good deal has naturally vanished.

TAGORE: That is a characteristic of music, much of it vanishes. A good deal depends on the singer; its medium is a living channel.

ROLLAND: In those days singers were terrible tyrants, especially in the south. In the north we had greater precision; the northern tradition is to have things as definite as possible.

TAGORE: Yes, that also is necessary. Your modern music is now well organized and harmony keeps the music pure, free from adulteration and counterfeits, as the currency of a country is kept pure by the mints.

ROLLAND: But don't you think it is only music which is petrified that can be kept pure in this way? Music which is living cannot be kept completely unchanged.

After some time Tagore said: 'You know, I am not merely a writer of verse; I am keenly interested in music and I myself compose songs. I have always felt puzzled why there are such great differences in musical form in different countries. Surely music should be more universal than other forms of art, for its vehicle is easy to reproduce and transmit from one country to another.'

ROLLAND: In every country music passes through several stages. The differences observed at any particular time may possibly be due to a difference of the particular stage of development. Music has its childhood, growth, and decay. The first song of emotion finds expression through a form which is scarcely adequate, then comes a perfect harmony between emotion and external form, and finally a certain formalization, a stereotyping and decay. If life continues, a new overflow and a new cycle begins again.

TAGORE: It is the same in every form of art; in literature also we find that a new urge creates its own form. After some time a form which was once new becomes old and worn through constant usage and is no longer adequate.

ROLLAND: Yes, and so with life also. We have the eternal flow from form to form.

TAGORE: Master-minds create new forms. Then come men without gift who imprison art in rusty fetters, and a time comes for breaking through bonds again.

ROLLAND: In Europe we are in the last phase: we feel we are imprisoned in a cage.

TAGORE: Yes, perhaps you have become too intellectualised; everything which is vital and humane is getting killed.

ROLLAND: There is a tendency for our whole life to degenerate into a huge mechanical organization.

TAGORE: Its signs are appearing everywhere over the face of your beautiful old Europe. We find everywhere the same mask, monotonous and devoid of beauty. The Italian cities which I visited are all becoming too modern in their appearance. But Florence was beautiful; the people there retained a certain detachment of mind which appealed to me very strongly. Without this detachment the life of art cannot exist.

ROLLAND: Yes, they still have a more rustic side to their life. Lately, Florentines have been looking back to their ancestors. This is probably the secret of Florence being a great artistic centre.

The talk took a lighter turn as tea was brought in. We all came out on the balcony. There was a brilliant glow in the west, but a little cloud came up. A few birds were singing in the neighbouring trees. The poet came back to the subject that they had been discussing a little earlier.

TAGORE: I first heard European songs when I was 17-year old, during my first visit to London. The artist was Milson, who used to have a great reputation in those days. He sang nature-songs, giving imitation of birds' cries, a kind of mimicry, which appeared extremely ludicrous to me.

Music should capture the delight of birds' songs, giving human form to the joy with which a bird sings. But it should not try to be a representation of such songs. Take the Indian rain-songs. They do not try to imitate the sound of falling raindrops. They rekindle the joy of rain-festivals, and convey something of the feeling associated with the rainy season. Somehow the songs of springtime do not have the same depth; I do not know why.

ROLLAND: When are your spring festivals held?

TAGORE: In Bengal towards the end of February and in early March when the southern spring-breeze begins to blow; the days are hot while nights are cool and pleasant. This is also the season for the peasant to start work in the field. Is it purely association which gives beauty to the rain-songs? Or is it something which is really inherent in them? It is true that we get accustomed to hear rain-melodies more frequently in the rainy season; it is possible, these tunes bring back to our mind the joy and delight of the rainy season itself. But then the spring and summer melodies possess equally strong associations and yet they do not stir us so profoundly.

ROLLAND: Perhaps the melodies themselves have peculiar differences.

TAGORE: In poetry a particular word possesses a subtle atmosphere of its own literary associations. The peculiar value of such words will never be intelligible to foreigners; they cannot be appreciated as being supremely beautiful by merely listening to them, or even by merely understanding their literal meaning, for the association will be lacking. In English take the following lines from Keats:

> .... magic casement opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

If I translate it into Bengali, it would become meaningless; it would have no significance for Bengali readers: '.... magic casement, opening on the foam of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.' The phrases lack in living association to our people. Similarly it is possible that a certain clause, a certain grouping of notes, gradually acquires a value through growth of association. We may have musical phrases acquiring new values like words in literature through long continued usage.

ROLLAND: This kind of image formation occurs in European music, for example, in Bach whose careful phrasings have been carefully studied. Much of the beauty of his music is due to the use of certain musical forms which he borrowed from the earlier music of the 17th and 18th centuries and which he used effectively with the instinct of a genius. In pastoral music, certain groupings are used continually which are even now in vogue. If these particular groupings are used in non-pastoral music, even then they would create an atmosphere of pastoral life. It is probable that your associations of rain-songs are also brought about in the same way.

Rolland was much interested in Indian music and asked many questions. 'What are your chief instruments?'

TAGORE: The *Vina* which gives extremely pure notes: it has not the flexibility of the violin, but preserves the purity of our melodies in a characteristic way.

He was still thinking about the suggestiveness of literature and came back to Keats.

TAGORE: Although Keats cannot be translated into Bengali, I can understand the beauty of his poems. We lack the proper associations to start with, but after some familiarity with the ideals and with some knowledge of the surroundings in which these poems were written, we also can acquire the facility of appreciating them. So in spite of individual or geographical peculiarities of form, there is something which is universal in poetry. It requires education and also the growth of familiarity, but, given these things, poetry can be appreciated by every one. Similarly, what is pleasant to the European ear must have something in it which is universal. Indian music also must have an appeal to foreigners who have the necessary training.

ROLLAND: Yes, after getting away from the part which is merely superficial or fashionable. Certain peculiarities belong only to the surface which reflect the passing fancy of a particular time.

TAGORE: In pictures, or in plastic art, the material consists of the representation of things which are in a way familiar to most people and can easily be apprehended by every one. But phrases in music are not familiar; so when we build up an architecture of music the whole thing appears fantastic to a foreigner. This is why it is much more difficult for a foreigner to understand foreign music than to appreciate foreign art.

After a little while, the poet went on to speak about the sources of inspiration in art and literature.

TAGORE: The starting point for all arts, poetry, painting or music, is the breath, the rhythm which is inherent in the human body and which is the same everywhere, and is therefore universal. I believe musicians must often be inspired by the rhythm of the circulation of blood or breath. A very interesting study would be a comparison of four tunes of different countries. With more developed music things become more complex, and the underlying similarities cannot be systematically traced.

24 June 1926

II VILLEUVE

TAGORE: I want to tell you about my Italian visit. In India I was full of hesitation whether I should come to Italy at all. In an Italian steamer in which I came I had a long talk with the captain. He was full of admiration for Mussolini and fascism. He told me how things in Italy had changed for the better

during the last few years. My Italian friends in India had also said the same thing. On my arrival in Rome I met the French ambassador. He and others all said that Mussolini had saved Italy from utter ruin. I said that that was not the most important thing. I was however trying to understand their point of view. They all agreed in thinking that during the great war something had happened which made Italian people extremely undisciplined. They all confessed to something in the Italian people which was against order and self-government. They said that those who cannot govern themselves must be governed by some external agency. If a large majority of people themselves confess that they have lost the capacity for self-government or self-control, it seems reasonable to admit that a different course would become applicable in their case. Then I saw Mussolini. In certain ways he has a striking appearance and I thought that his personality may have had a direct appeal to the Italian people. I tried to reconcile the whole situation in the following way.

With the tremendous growth of science you have become in almost everything, Government or State, like everything else in Europe, impersonal. The great advance of science gave you the power to create machineries of all kinds and Europe thought that the human factor can be eliminated in machinery. In fact, as machinery was supposed to be absolutely free from mistakes, it was thought that society could be saved better by mechanical organization than by human personalities; but the great danger is that if something goes wrong with the machine there is an immediate deadlock. Owing to the great war the social and administrative body in Europe broke down and there was great misery; the people who suffered cried for help and found that they could not get any help from machines but had to depend on individuals. If at this stage somebody comes forward with a forceful personality and announces that he has saved them, then the people naturally accept him as their saviour; specially when they saw that Mussolini succeeded in clearing away the wreckage of the parliamentary machine and substituted his word as law. The common people, in spite of all their weakness, are human beings. The personality of Mussolini could not but have a great effect on them, specially at a time when they had lost faith in their old mechanical contrivances.

ROLLAND: The question is whether it would be worth while to lose one's reason in order to live.

TAGORE: It all depends on the actual facts. A situation may come about in which a temporary surrender of one's initiative may be welcome. I was told that Italy had become a land of lunatics. It was the best that could happen for the people themselves to put the whole country under the control of a masterful personality who alone could bring back order. Once this was achieved, they could hope for higher things to come back in time. I have been told that this is what actually happened. Mussolini has succeeded in bringing back law and order to the people. Now they are prosperous

and happy, in fact far better than they were just after the war. I am told that formerly peaceful citizens could not go out without weapons and ran the risk of being assassinated and looted at any moment. One thing is now changed, that foreigners can now travel with security in every part in Italy and I was assured that all this was due to the forceful personality of Mussolini.

Duke Scottie in Milan told me that his mouth is shut. My guide Formichi told me that Duke Scottie was an incorrigible anti-Fascist. While I had been talking with the Duke, from time to time he got extremely nervous so that I did not get an opportunity of having a quiet talk with the Duke.

ROLLAND: The most undesirable thing to my mind is that nobody could speak out. I realize the difficulties of the situation in Italy. England, France and Italy were the three countries which had given the parliamentary system a trial on a big scale. England is in a very fortunate position because her parliamentary education began centuries ago and a sound, reliable civic consciousness has steadily grown up and matured. When parliamentarism is in danger, voluntary organizations simultaneously spring up to defend it and lend their support. This has made political conditions in England extremely suitable. In France love of liberty is strong among the individuals but there is very little organization. They cannot resist effectively the encroachment on the liberties of the people. They submit easily. In Italy it is still worse. There is very little initiative among the populace; they submit to the least sort of organized force. In the case of France I have myself known many critical periods. I remember in 1877 General Boulanger was almost on the point of becoming the Dictator of France. If he had shown a little more initiative he would certainly have become the Dictator. Most of the people were Republicans, but they would have failed to resist him. My own brother was at a Teachers Training School where everybody was Republican. Many of them wanted to issue a manifesto protesting against Boulanger, but out of about 130 only 8 actually signed and the rest were afraid, although the Dictator was not actually in power. They were afraid of their future.

I believe the same thing, or still worse, is actually happening in Italy. In reality only a small group of Fascists, very ardent, very sincere, have got power. I have lived in Italy for a long time and my own impression is that the people are extremely undisciplined. The very huge crowd which immensely admires Mussolini today would crush him tomorrow if he shows the least weakness. I remember them shouting *Viva Crespi* one day and break his statue the next day. I have seen them breaking the doors of the French embassy one day and threaten the German legation the next day. Mussolini will remain in power so long as he is absolutely *in form* and strong. If he shakes a little the whole country will rapidly turn against him.

I feel sorry that a large number of ardent idealists who are followers

of Mazzini were prevented from speaking to you in Italy. A young Italian came to see me. He had started several philanthropic and educational institutions before the war and had gathered a group of teachers, but all this was broken up as he had not subscribed to Fascism and would not agree to the instruction of the Fascist organization in his own institution. He saw the Minister of Education himself and asked the Minister, 'Do you want me to lose my soul?' To that the Minister replied, 'It is written in the Gospel that you must lose your soul to win it.' And he said he could not advise any teacher to help him with the work of the institution, for it would be over with him immediately. I have heard the same song from Dr Salvamini, the great historian of Mazzini and Italian liberty. He had to leave Italy and settle in England, which also was only possible because he had some private fortune. Mussolini has issued a decree under which exiles from Italy lose their rights of citizenship and their properties in Europe are confiscated. I have also seen Fascist papers writing editorials about the 'sacred' murder of Salvamini.

A young man of about twenty-five came to see me from Milan. He was a delegate who spoke as a representative of the people. He told me: 'We have suffered physical oppression but the greater oppression was that our mouths were forcibly shut. I have come to talk to you so that you may tell Tagore.' The young man went to Germany. I shall try to put you in touch with him.

I realize fully how the present dominance of the Fascist has come about. The political crisis after the war was aggravated by the failure of the socialists who proved doubly unfit for governing the country. I recognize that the seizure of power by Mussolini was inevitable. It was a logical necessity. Conditions in Italy at that time were somewhat similar to those in France at the end of the 18th century when Bonaparte came to prominence. A great deal depends upon the man but even Napoleon has done greater harm to France than good. I believe Italy is in a much worse condition, because Mussolini has not got the personality of Napoleon. The people of Italy are more impulsive and Mussolini is playing with fire. He is constantly speaking against foreign governments and is insisting on the patriotic ambition of his countrymen. When he speaks to big gatherings and asks, 'To whom does Nice belong, to whom does Savoy belong?' they all shout together 'To us.' He is rousing them and he is appealing to their hatred of other nations. I have no doubt that he is the greatest menace to the whole of Europe.'

25 June 1926

III

TAGORE: Do you think that Geneva is likely to play an important role in the world of international relationship?

ROLLAND: It may, but a good deal depends on factors over which Geneva has no control.

TAGORE: The League of Nations seems to me to be but one of the various forces which are at work here. At the present moment it is by no means the most instrumental for the readjustment of international relationships. It may or may not develop into a power for bringing greater harmony in the political world. I have much faith in the various international groups and societies and the individuals working in this place, and my hope is that they will eventually create in Geneva a genuine center of international activities which will shape the politics of the future.

ROLLAND: We find a large number of people eagerly looking for a message from the East. India, they think—and I may add, rightly—is the country that can in this epoch give that message to the world.

TAGORE: It is curious to note how India has furnished probably the first internationally minded man of the nineteenth century. I mean Raja Rammohun Roy; he had a passion for truth. He came from an orthodox Brahmin family, but he broke all bonds of superstition and formalism. He wanted to understand Buddhism, went to Tibet, studied Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Persian, English, French; he traveled widely in Europe, and died in Bristol. Spiritual truth for him did not mean a sort of ecclesiasticism confined within sectarian sanctuaries; nor did he think that it could be inflicted upon people outside the sect by men who have professional rights to preach it as a doctrine. He realized that a bond of spiritual unity links the whole of mankind and that it is the purpose of religion to reach down to that fundamental unity of human relationship, of human efforts and achievements.

ROLLAND: I have often wondered at the spirit of religious toleration in India; it is unlike anything we have known in the West. The cosmic nature of your religion and the composite character of your civilization make this possible. India has allowed all kinds of religious faith and practice to flourish side by side.

TAGORE: Perhaps that has also been our weakness, and it is due to an indiscriminate spirit of toleration that all forms of religious creeds and crudities have run riot in India, making it difficult for us to realize the true foundation of our spiritual faith. The practice of animal sacrifice, for instance, has nothing to do with our religion, yet many people sanction it on the ground of tradition. Similar aberrations of religion can be found in every country. Our concern in India today is to remove them and intensify the larger beliefs which are our true spiritual heritage.

ROLLAND: In Christian scriptures, too, this theme of animal sacrifice dominates. Take the opening chapters: God gave preference to Abel because he had offered a lamb for sacrifice.

TAGORE: I have never been able to love the God of the Old Testament.

ROLLAND: . . . The emphasis is wrongly placed, and the attitude is not spiritual in the larger sense.

TAGORE: We should stress always the 'larger sense.' Truth cannot afford to be tolerant where it faces positive evil; it is like sunlight, which makes the

existence of evil germs impossible. As a matter of fact, Indian religious life suffers today from the lack of a wholesome spirit of intolerance, which is characteristic of creative religion. Even a vogue of atheism may do good to India today, even though my country will never accept atheism as her permanent faith. It will sweep away all noxious undergrowths in the forest, and the tall trees will remain intact. At the present moment even a gift of negation from the West will be of value to a large section of the Indian people.

ROLLAND: I believe that scientific rationalism will help to solve India's question.

TAGORE: I know that India can never believe in mere intellectual determination for any long period of time; balance and harmony will certainly be restored. That is why a temporary swing in one direction may help us to arrive at the central adjustment of spiritual life. Science should come to our aid to be humanized by us at the end.

ROLLAND: Science is probably the most international element in the modern world; that is, the spirit of co-operation in scientific research. But we have today poison gas at the disposal of politicians. It is tragic that scientists are at the disposal of military powers who are not in the least interested in the progress of human thought and culture.... The problem today is not so much the antagonism of nations as the clash between different classes in the body of a nation itself. This does not, of course, justify or minimize to any degree the real curse of aggressive nationalism and the spirit of war.

TAGORE: Words are too conscious; lines are not. Ideas have their form and colour, which wait for their incarnation in pictorial art. Just now painting has become a mania with me. My morning began with songs and poems; now, in the evening of my life, my mind is filled with forms and colours.

1930

SALVADORI AND TAGORE

[*The reports in Italian papers of interviews with Rabindranath Tagore aroused a great deal of concern among Italians in exile in Switzerland, and when the poet was at Zürich he was interviewed by the wife of one of their leaders, Professor Salvadori who was himself too ill to visit Tagore.*]

'You, who are so good,' asked Signora Salvadori, 'why did you come to Italy, now the land of violence and persecution?'

The poet replied:

TAGORE: Let me tell you why I came to Italy this time. As you know I had been invited by your people in Milan last year. I was strongly moved when I found that the people loved me and wanted me to be with them for some

time. I feel ill, however, and had to return to India before fulfilling my engagements in other towns. I promised to come back in the following summer.

In India the reports of Fascist atrocities reached me from time to time, and I had serious misgivings about coming back to Italy. About this time Professor Formichi came to Santiniketan, bringing with him from Mussolini a wonderful gift of books and a valuable collection of art reproductions for my institution. He also brought an appreciative letter from Mussolini himself. His gift struck me as particularly appropriate for helping us in our work of buil-ding up an international institution of fellowship which should be a true centre for the meeting of East and West. The services of Professor Formichi and Dr Tucci which have been lent to us also helped in our work. In my message to Mussolini I expressed my thanks to him for all this, but this was purely in connection with my own work, and had no reference to his political activities.

Professor Formichi and Dr Tucci encouraged me to come to Italy, but my misgivings were not dispelled, and at one time I had practically decided to give up my projected tour in Italy. However, I had my promise to fulfil. I also had a strong desire to meet and spend a few days with Romain Rolland, and this seemed the last chance of doing so. So at last I came to Italy and was taken to Rome.

I had no opportunities to study the genesis or the activities of the Fascist movement and I did not express any opinion about it. In fact in most of my interviews I was careful to explain that I was not competent to say anything either for or against Fascism, not having studied it.

About Mussolini himself I must, however, say that he did interest me as an artist. His personality was striking. As a poet the human element—even in politics—touches me more deeply than abstract theories. Modern civilization is too impersonal for me. The expression of the personal man in his work may or may not be good, may even be terrible, but when it makes itself powerfully evident it is fascinating. Moral judgment and the interest invoked by a dramatic personality are two entirely different things. Mussolini struck me as a masterful personality. He seems not only to have strength of determination, but a quick instinct for realizing his opportunities which has enabled him to obtain such perfect mastery over a whole people. His great dramatic personality brought to my vision a man riding upon a wild horse who by his marvellous strength checked almost an insane people and controlled them.

SIGNORA SALVADORI: I understand: you were interested in his character. He is certainly interesting, but he did not actually achieve all this by his own strength. The Socialists had already realized their own failure even before Mussolini came into power. He is maintaining his power by violence and by crushing the freedom of speech.

TAGORE: The people with whom I came into contact in Italy were almost unanimous in assuring me that Mussolini had saved Italy from anarchy

and utter ruin. The reports of the Fascist methods that reached me in India were of a revolting nature and came chiefly from English sources. Lately we have lost our faith in all such reports from the West in which the representatives of a people are accused of public crimes. For we know that along with their army and navy and aircraft the Western nations have also perfected their organizations for a world-wide propaganda of misrepresentation. Yet I could not altogether ignore these reports. I was therefore particularly impressed when I found Mussolini being praised by foreigners—notably by Englishmen residing in Italy—who regarded him as a saviour of Italy.

SIGNORA SALVADORI: It is not true. This is the opinion of people who are in favour of Fascism. Foreigners who are not friendly to Fascism cannot give free expression to their opinion in Italy. People who hold contrary views were not allowed to see you.

TAGORE: I have realized that. I had no occasion to come into touch with any individual holding a contrary opinion. This seemed to me neither natural nor wholesome. We are justified in feeling suspicious of the true character of an idea for whose sake it becomes necessary to terrify a whole people into unanimity of expression.

SIGNORA SALVADORI: It is not true that Mussolini had saved Italy from financial ruin. The financial position of Italy was better before Mussolini came into power. Look at the *lira*, it was 70 to the pound, and it is now 130. There was great unrest in Italy certainly after the war, but this unrest was not Bolshevism. Foreigners do not know, and merely repeat conventional tales. Italy was actually on the way to recovering from the unrest when Mussolini started his campaign. But what makes us unhappy is that you have unintentionally helped to support Fascism. We know it is unintentional, for you are too good to do so.

TAGORE: I did not support Fascism, though I did express my admiration for Mussolini as possessing the personality which alone can effect the miracles of creation in human history. I was careful to make this distinction. About Fascism the only thing of which I was assured by almost everyone I met was that it had saved Italy from economic ruin.

SIGNORA SALVADORI: That is not true.

TAGORE: Even had it been true it would not affect my position. Even if Italy is prosperous—although you deny this very fact—it is of no avail. As an outsider I must claim something more. If Italy does not contribute something which is great, which is for all men and for all time, we cannot be satisfied. If, on the contrary, Italy, in the pursuit of her political power and material gain, has sacrificed some ideal of humanity she deserves condemnation, not only for her own sake but for the sake of us all. In this she becomes a universal menace, imperilling the foundation of human relationship. Your Garibaldi fought for the cause of independence which was not restricted to his own country. He fought for an ideal, so all humanity is grateful to him.

In an interview which I gave just before my departure from Rome I said: 'I am not really competent to judge what the Italian people think and wish. I hope they will realize that the mere pursuit of material wealth will never make them great. They will be a great world power only when they give the world permanent gifts of the spirit. Otherwise national prosperity and political power die with them. These are consumed in the process of enjoyment: but products of the spirit are for all time and for all countries.'

Before leaving Mussolini I had the opportunity to tell him what I felt,—that mere discipline of law and order is not a final gain, it is only of value if it gives expansion to that background of freedom which is necessary for all great creations of the spirit.

I have explained my own position. I should now like to hear what you have got to tell me—your own experience.

I can quite understand how even foreigners—for example, Englishmen residing in Italy—could condone acts of violence committed in the name of political necessity. This has become possible because of the callousness which possesses the world today. The world has, since the war, become accustomed to violence. This is why the English people could take part in and tolerate the atrocities committed in Ireland during the 'Black-and-Tan' madness. In Europe people now-a-days do not seem to feel keenly about outrages committed by the men in power. I cannot but think that such deeds of ferocity as you speak of would have shocked the moral sense of Europe before the war.

SIGNORA SALVADORI: But nothing appears in the papers in Italy. They dare not publish anything. In Florence 18 people were shot in one night. A father in bed was attacked, and while the children were shouting: 'Don't kill our father,' they shot him in his bed. You don't know what we have suffered. I myself heard the screams of a woman whose husband was killed before her eyes. But nothing in the papers—never!

TAGORE: I wish I had known for certain the dark deeds that were being done in Italy, then I would not have come to that country—I certainly would not. I had not met any of the people who suffered. But now that I have seen you I realize my own responsibility.

SIGNORA SALVADORI: We have no means, we are helpless, we have no money, and we cannot do anything. We do not know how to inform other people. I hope you will help us. Italy is now buried in lies everywhere. It is so bad for the young generation—this teaching them love for Fascism and for morbid patriotism.

Of course there are a few honest Fascists who do not know the violent side, and who, not knowing, sincerely believe in Fascism. But most people are terrorised into acquiescing in it. We who have suffered know what it is in reality.

TAGORE: Let me tell you before we part that I have a genuine love for the Italian people, and I fervently hope that this great period of pain through which

they are passing will not coerce them into accepting an ambition for fatness of prosperity in place of spiritual greatness. Once Italy was the luminous centre of the West. In the art galleries of Rome and Florence the evidence of her marvellous creative power, both in its variety of perfection, has been overwhelming in its effect on a visitor like myself who comes for the first time to witness it. This exuberant impulse of creation which once overflowed the western continent must still be lying in suspense in her being, and I hope it will not be smothered into a stillness of death by any reign of terror and lure of greed, that once more it will find its true work and rescue Europe from the dominion of the machine.

1926

ANGELICA BALBAN AND TAGORE

I WAS IN Vienna when Tagore, the Indian poet and philosopher was lecturing there, about two years after the assassination of Matteotti. This murder had evoked such a reaction to the Fascist *regime* that *emigre* opinion was shocked at the announcement that Tagore has been a guest of the Fascist Government in Italy. Modigaliani, who had participated as an attorney in the 'trial' of Matteotti's murderers, was in Vienna at this time and he asked me to accompany him to an appointment with Tagore and to act as his translator.

Tagore was staying at the fashionable hotel, where he was obviously an object of idolatry among the wealthy patrons.

'There is no need to tell me the details of what is going on in Italy,' he said. 'I have been there and I do not know any thing I could say or do about it.'

I would have left immediately had not Modigliani begun to speak in Italian. I started to translate his remarks, Tagore interrupted me.

'Are you the person who gave the interview about Mussolini that was published a few months ago?'

His secretary answered before I could speak, 'Yes, this is the lady whose interviews and articles have interested you so much.'

The whole atmosphere changed and Tagore became an understanding and even apologetic human being.

'Your interpretation of Mussolini's character,' he said, 'coincides with the impression he made upon me—a coward and an actor. When I asked the English ambassador if he thought my impression was correct, he said, it was not—that Mussolini was a great courageous man. However, he did not convince me and I was glad to have a confirmation, in your interview of my impression. I should like you to tell me more.'

'I shall have to begin by saying,' I answered, 'that the Italian people who

have attempted more than any other people, to apply your own attitude towards war, do not deserve that you should accept the hospitality of a man who came to power through violence and assassination.'

'Please do not misunderstand me,' he interrupted, 'when I came to Italy I knew nothing about the situation nor could I get in touch with reality. You are the second person who has given me any idea of what Fascism is: The first one I met also after had left Italy. You may be sure that I will make a statement of what I think about the fascist *regime*.'

The secretary told me that Tagore had numerous clippings of Fascism which he was eager to have translated:

One of the next issues of the Viennese Daily *Neue Freie Presse* contained a long article by Tagore dealing with this subject. It ended with the statement: 'To be ruled by a tyrant is a great misfortune for any country. But to know that one has worshipped an individual who owes his success only to his negative quality is a tragedy. . .' This comment, which I quote only from memory, contained the kernel of the tragedy of Italy. When all the factors which contributed to Mussolini's rise to power are unveiled—which can happen only after his fall most of those who today pretend that 'he must have some good qualities' will declare that they have always known that he was an imposter and an adventurer.

Their recognition of this fact may come too late. They themselves may be the victims of some similar demagogue in their own country whose rise they have encouraged through similar tolerance and ignorance of the conditions which make for Fascism. Hitalarism in Germany and Austria, undeclared war in Abyssania, China and Spain would not be possible if not for the complicity of public opinion in the social and economic condition from which war and fascism arise.

1926

INTERVIEW WITH F.L. MINIGERODE

ON CIVILIZATION

'WHAT DOES Asia think of Christian civilization? Rabindranath Tagore—Nobel prize-winner for literature in 1913 and founder of the International Institution at Santiniketan, in Bengal—repeated the question slowly,' writes F.L. Minigerode in the *New York Times*.

'It would be difficult to imagine a more dignified, a more aristocratic man than Tagore. His long, snowy hair and snowy beard; his slender and delicate hands; his fine face (the face of a man who must have thought fine

thoughts all his life), seemed supremely belonging to the bearer of a message of goodwill.

'Rabindranath Tagore is often called a "mystic." But he strikes one as being too full of the milk of human kindness to be mystical in quite the usual sense.

'Abruptly he straightened and leaned forward. Then, slowly in a voice that spoke the English tongue in accents making every word clear and musical, he repeated again the question: "What does Asia think of Christian civilization?" And now the answer was forthcoming.

' "Europe,' "he began, "has lost prestige tremendously throughout all Asia and Asiatics are more than ever convinced that; spiritually, Europe has nothing to give them. Asia in the years gone by, used to look-upon Europe with something akin to reverence. Today, Asia thinks that Europe does not speak the truth."

MAGNIFICENT DREAMS

'As a boy I looked eagerly forward to the time when I should pay my first visit to Europe. I dreamed of magnificent things there—not material things, but fine thoughts, fine characteristics. I looked forward to a meeting, there people with conscience that guided not only the individual but the nation. I had, however, counted too much upon the spirituality that seemed to abound in the early days of the nineteenth century, when Keats and Shelley and Byron and a host of others seemed to be sounding a trumpet call to higher things. They had fired my imagination with ideals.

'Later Abraham Lincoln rose to superb heights. Garibaldi impressed me as a man in search of a fight for right. The writings and histories of such men had influenced me strongly; made me believe that in Europe I should find a true consciousness in men, in peoples, in nations; that I should discover a continent where all the people were striving for high ideals—I was poignantly disappointed.

'In my travels through the so-called highly civilized countries—in Europe, in America, in Japan—I have found all the existing influences carrying the nations headlong toward material things, to the exclusion of spiritual things. These material things are of little worth. Today the great nations and their great men measure success in terms of bulk. This means that they are not great.

'It is no great achievement to understand and put to use the forces of electricity. A man has not accomplished much merely because his factory can turn out a thousand motor cars in a day. It is all done by rule and line, and man can easily master the details of such things. But who can fathom the intricacies of the human being? Great surgeons know the flesh, but who attempts to learn the spirit of men?

'The multiplication table has become greater than the Ten Commandments. Let us have everything on a big scale, seems to be the watchword of the day. Western civilization has put everything on a scale of mass production,

except the thoughts and influences at work in the human mind. Those are sadly neglected.

'But what the peoples of Asia observe with most burning apprehension is the aggressive spirit of nationalism and imperialism which the nations of Europe cultivate. It is a menace to the whole world. Europe's political demoralization is so acute that it must necessarily react on Asia, whose peoples are the victims of Western exploitation.'

Tagore had mentioned Japan, and Mr Minigerode asked him how, in his opinion, Japan had been changed spiritually by her steadily increasing contact with the ideas of Europe.

'It has changed her completely,' he said, 'The spirit of bigness, of material prosperity of aggrandisement holds her tightly. The ancient Samurai spirit is dead. Japan has joined the march of territorial expansion.

'The moral self-respect of a people is greater than all material glories. Imperialism stifles self-respect and makes men slaves. It does not allow them to think and speak for themselves. Western civilization came into being because the power to rule was distributed among a whole people. There was an individual dignity, an individual consciousness of importance. Dictatorships put an end to such individuality.'

'Speaking of dictators, Dr Tagore, you have recently been received with great cordiality by Mussolini—yet with your love of freedom for the individual you surely do not approve Fascist methods?'

'My popularity waned quite suddenly in Italy,' he replied, 'When I had told them my true opinion of a Government that permitted little or no individual freedom, I found myself deserted by all who had before been ready to honour me.

'In Italy the worship of unscrupulous force is the vehicle of nationalism, and this force keeps alive the fire of international jealousy. It may ultimately be the means of bringing about universal devastation. The world is knit closely together in these days of fast steamships, railways and aeroplanes. Boundaries are but imaginary lines that do not actually separate one nation from another. Any process of destruction once underway will sweep beyond these frontiers. Mountains and seas are no longer barriers.'

The Italian adventure has had many echoes. According to cable reports, the Italian Press afterward published flattering comments attributed to Dr. Tagore, which made it appear that he was thoroughly in accord with the principles of Fascism but the poet after he had left Italy, felt compelled to deny. He issued a statement, part of which follows:

'The methods and basic principles of Fascism concern all humanity and it is absurd to imagine that would ever support a movement that ruthlessly suppress free speech, that compels obedience to its commands that are against the convictions of individuals and that follows the blood bespattered path of violence and secret crime.

'I have declared over and over again that the aggressive spirit of nationalism and imperialism observed by most Western nations like a religion,

constitutes a menace to the whole world. The moral retrogression that it has produced in European politics has very devastating consequences, especially for the people of the East who are at the mercy of Western methods of exploitation.

'So even if it were not almost criminal, it would at least be very foolish of me to admire a political ideal that comes out openly for brutal violence as the moving force of civilization. And if one considers this barbarism, which is not at all impossible of combination with material prosperity, as desirable, its cost is fearfully high.'

For many years Rabindranath Tagore has been preaching his gospel of peace and universal brotherhood. His ideal is the perfect whole, not the whole broken up into parts continually warring against each other. 'The universe,' one of his disciples once wrote, summing up the philosophy of Tagore, 'is to be viewed as a single family where the different neighbours are the members, each contributing its quota to the welfare of the whole. All peoples will then have a place in the sun.' And in Rabindranath's own image we read:

'As the mission of the rose lies in the unfoldment of the petals which implies distinctness; so the rose of humanity is perfect only when the diverse races and the nations have evolved their perfect distinct characteristics, but all attached in the stem of humanity by the bond of love.' He has further said: 'There is a moral law in this world which has its application both in individual and to organized bodies of men. You cannot go on violating these laws in the name of your nation yet enjoy their advantage as individuals. We may forget truth for our convenience, but truth does not forget us. Prosperity cannot save itself without moral foundation. Unless man can see the gaping chasm between his full storehouse and his humanity, until he can feel the unity of mankind, the kind of barbarism which you call civilization will exist.'

'I remembered,' says Mr Minigerode, 'Dr Tagore's having said that if Christ came to New York he would be forcibly turned back for lack of dollars, if for no other reason, and also that if Christ had been born in America the Ku Klux Klan would have destroyed Him.'

'Do you think we are really as bad as all that!'

He countered the query with one of his own.

'Is it not true today that such an utterance as "Blessed are the meek" is political blasphemy? Suppose Christ said in America: "Blessed are the poor." It would be judged economic heresy. And if He told your country that it is as easy for the prosperous to reach the Kingdom of Heaven as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, would He not be thrown into prison? Perhaps America would not go so far as to inflict physical punishment upon Christ because of his utterances. But the fact remains, I think, that to be either meek or poor in America to. . . .[1]

'Do you class America with the Great European Powers that utterly lack spirituality,or do you think there is a spiritual torch still burning?'

'I am convinced that America is searching—certainly some Americans

[1] A few words in the sentence are illigible.

are searching—for ideals,' he answered. 'Whether these seekers for better things will be evolved because of the overwhelming members in the opposite camp, or whether they will eventually make their voices heard throughout the world and be a great power for the good of all peoples, I am not qualified to prophesy. All men must hope that they will succeed.'

1926

H.G. WELLS AND TAGORE

TAGORE: The tendency in modern civilization is to make the world uniform. Calcutta, Bombay, Hong Kong and other cities are more or less alike, wearing big masks which represent no country in particular.

WELLS: Yet don't you think this very fact is an indication that we are reaching out for a new world-wide human order which refuses to be localized?

TAGORE: Our individual physiognomy need not be the same. Let the mind be universal. The individual should not be sacrificed.

WELLS: We are gradually thinking now of one human civilization on the foundation of which individualities will have great chance of fulfilment. The individual, as we take him, has suffered from the fact that civilization has been split up into separate units, instead of being merged into a universal whole, which seems to be the natural destiny of humankind.

TAGORE: I believe the unity of human civilization can be better maintained by the linking up in fellowship and co-operation of the different civilizations of the world. Do you think there is a tendency to have one common language for humanity?

WELLS: One common language will probably be forced on mankind whether we like it or not. Previously a community of fine minds created a new dialect. Now it is necessity that will compel us to accept a universal language.

TAGORE: I quite agree. The time for five-mile dialects is fast vanishing. Rapid communication makes for a common language. Yet this common language probably would not exclude national languages. There is again the curious fact that just now, along with the growing unities of the human mind, the development of national self-consciousness is leading to the formation or rather revival of national languages everywhere. Don't you think that in America, in spite of constant touch between America and England, the English language is tending toward a definite modification and change?

WELLS: I wonder if that is the case now. Forty or fifty years ago this would have been the case, but now in literature and in common speech it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between English and American. There seems to be much more repercussion in the other direction.

Today we are elaborating and perfecting physical methods of transmitting words. Translation is a bother. Take your poems—do they not lose much by that process? If you had a method of making them intelligible to all people at the same time, it would be really wonderful.

TAGORE: Music of different nations has a common psychological foundation, and yet that does not mean that national music should not exist. The same thing is, in my opinion, probably true for literature.

WELLS: Modern music is going from one country to another without loss—from Purcell to Bach, then Brahms, then Russian music, then oriental. Music is of all things in the world the most international.

TAGORE: May I add something? I have composed more than three hundred pieces of music. They are all sealed from the West because they cannot properly be given to you in your own notation. Perhaps they would not be intelligible to your people even if I could get them written down in European notation.

WELLS: The West may get used to your music.

TAGORE: Certain forms of tunes and melodies which move us profoundly seem to baffle western listeners; yet, as you say, perhaps closer acquaintance with them may gradually lead to their appreciation in the West.

WELLS: Artistic expression in the future will probably be quite different from what it is today; the medium will be the same and comprehensible to all. Take radio, which links together the world. And we cannot prevent further invention. Perhaps in the future, when the present clamor for dialects and national languages in broadcasting subsides and new discoveries in science are made, we shall be conversing with one another through a common medium of speech yet undreamt of.

TAGORE: We have to create the new psychology needed for this age. We have to adjust ourselves to the new necessities and conditions of civilization.

WELLS: Adjustments, terrible adjustments!

TAGORE: Do you think there are any fundamental racial difficulties?

WELLS: No. New races are appearing and reappearing, perpetual fluctuations. There have been race mixtures from the earliest historical times; India is the supreme example of this. In Bengal, for instance, there has been an amazing mixture of races in spite of castes and other barriers.

TAGORE: There is the question of race pride. Can the West fully acknowledge the East? If mutual acceptance is not possible, then I shall be very sorry for that country which rejects another's culture. Study can bring no harm, tho-ugh men like Dr Haas and Henri Matisse seem to think that the eastern mind should not go outside eastern countries, and then everything will be all right.

WELLS: I hope you disagree. So do I!

TAGORE: It is regrettable that any race or nation should claim divine favoritism and assume inherent superiority to all others in the scheme of creation.

WELLS: The supremacy of the West is only a question of probably the past hundred years. Before the battle of Lepanto the Turks were dominating

the West; the voyage of Columbus was undertaken to avoid the Turks. Elizabethan writers and even their successors were struck by the wealth and the high material standards of the East. The history of western ascendancy is very brief indeed.

TAGORE: Physical science of the nineteenth century probably has created this spirit of race superiority in the West. When the East assimilates this physical science, the tide may turn and take a normal course.

WELLS: Modern science is not exactly European. A series of accidents and peculiar circumstances prevented some of the eastern countries from applying the discoveries made by humanists in other parts of the world. They themselves had once originated and developed a great many of the sciences that were later on taken up by the West and given greater perfection. Today, Japanese, Chinese and Indian names in the world of science are gaining due recognition.

TAGORE: India has been in a bad situation.

WELLS: When Macaulay imposed a third-rate literature and a poor system of education on India, Indians naturally resented it. No human being can live on Scott's poetry. I believe that things are now changing. But, remain assured, we English were not better off. We were no less badly educated than the average Indian, probably even worse.

TAGORE: Our difficulty is that our contact with the great civilization of the West has not been a natural one. Japan has absorbed more of the western culture because she has been free to accept or reject according to her needs.

WELLS: It is a very bad story indeed, because there have been such great opportunities for knowing each other.

TAGORE: And then, the channels of education have become dry river beds, the current of our resources having systematically been diverted along other directions.

WELLS: I also am a member of a subject race. I am taxed enormously. I have to send my check—so much for military aviation, so much for the diplomatic machinery of government! You see, we suffer from the same evils. In India the tradition of officialdom is, of course, more unnatural and has been going on for a long time. The Moguls, before the English came, seem to have been as indiscriminate as our own people.

TAGORE: And yet there is a difference. The Mogul government was not scientifically efficient and mechanical to a degree. The Moguls wanted money, and so long as they could live in luxury they did not wish to interfere with the progressive village communities in India. The Muslim emperors did not dictate terms and force the hands of Indian educators and villagers. Now, for instance, the ancient educational systems of India are completely disorganized, and all indigenous educational effort has to depend on official recognition.

WELLS: 'Recognition' by the state, and good bye to education!

TAGORE: I have often been asked what my plans are. My reply is that I have no

scheme. My country, like every other, will evolve its own constitution; it will pass through its experimental phase and settle down into something probably quite different from what you or I expect.

1936

EINSTEIN AND TAGORE

I

EINSTEIN: Do you believe in the Divine as isolated from the world?

TAGORE: Not isolated. The infinite personality of Man comprehends the Universe. There cannot be anything that cannot be subsumed by the human personality, and this proves that the truth of the Universe is human truth. I have taken a scientific fact to illustrate this—Matter is composed of protons and electrons, with gaps between them; but matter may seem to be solid. Similarly humanity is composed of individuals, yet they have their inter-connection of human relationship, which gives living solidarity to man's world. The entire universe is linked up with us in a similar manner, it is a human universe. I have pursued this thought through art, literature and the religious consciousness of man.

EINSTEIN: There are two different conceptions about the nature of the universe: (1) The world as a unity dependent on humanity. (2) The world as a reality independent of the human factor.

TAGORE: When our universe is in harmony with Man, the eternal, we know it as truth, we feel it as beauty.

EINSTEIN: This is a purely human conception of the universe.

TAGORE: There can be no other conception. This world is a human world—the scientific view of it is also that of the scientific man. There is some standard of reason and enjoyment which gives it truth, the standard of the Eternal Man whose experiences are through our experiences.

EINSTEIN: This is a realization of the human entity.

TAGORE: Yes, one eternal entity. We have to realize it through our emotions and activities. We realize the Supreme Man who has no individual limitations through our limitations. Science is concerned with that which is not confined to individuals; it is the impersonal human world of truths. Religion realizes these truths and links them up with our deeper needs; our individual consciousness of truth gains universal significance. Religion applies values to truth, and we know truth as good through our own harmony with it.

EINSTEEIN: Truth, then, or Beauty, is not independent of man?

TAGORE: No.

EINSTEIN: If there would be no human beings any more, the Apollo of Belvedere would no longer be beautiful.

TAGORE: No.

EINSTEIN: I agree with regard to this conception of Beauty, but not with regard to Truth.

TAGORE: Why not? Truth is realized through man.

EINSTEIN: I cannot prove that my conception is right, but that is my religion.

TAGORE: Beauty is in the ideal of perfect harmony which is in the Universal Being; Truth the perfect comprehension of the Universal Mind. We individuals approach it through our own mistakes and blunders, through our accumulated experience, through our illumined consciousness—how, otherwise, can we know Truth?

EINSTEIN: I cannot prove scientifically that truth must be conceived as a truth that is valid independent of humanity; but I believe it firmly. I believe, for instance, that the Pythagorean theorem in geometry states something that is approximately true, independent of the existence of man. Anyway, if there is a *reality* independent of man there is also a truth relative to this reality; and in the same way the negation of the first engenders a negation of the existence of the latter.

TAGORE: Truth, which is one with the Universal Being, must essentially be human, otherwise whatever we individuals realize as true can never be called truth—at least the truth which is described as scientific and can only be reached through the process of logic, in other words, by an organ of thoughts which is human. According to Indian Philosophy there is Brahman the absolute Truth, which cannot be conceived by the isolation of the individual mind or described by words, but can only be realized by completely merging the individual in its infinity. But such a truth cannot belong to Science. The nature of truth which we are discussing is an appearance—that is to say what appears to be true to the human mind and therefore is human, and may be called *māyā*, or illusion.

EINSTEIN: So according to your conception, which may be the Indian conception, it is not the illusion of the individual, but of humanity as a whole.

TAGORE: In science we go through the discipline of eliminating the personal limitations of our individual minds and thus reach that comprehension of truth which is in the mind of the Universal Man.

EINSTEIN: The problem begins whether Truth is independent of our consciousness.

TAGORE: What we call truth lies in the rational harmony between the subjective and objective aspects of reality, both of which belong to the super-personal man.

EINSTEIN: Even in our everyday life we feel compelled to ascribe a reality independent of man to the objects we use. We do this to connect the experiences of our senses in a reasonable way. For instance, if nobody is in this house, yet that table remains where it is.

TAGORE: Yes, it remains outside the individual mind, but not outside the universal mind. The table which I perceive is perceptible by the same kind of consciousness which I possess.

Tagore and Gandhi
(*Courtesy*: Rabindra Bhavan, Visva-Bharati)

Einstein and Tagore
(*Courtesy*: Rabindra Bhavan, Visva-Bharati)

Rolland and Tagore
(*Courtesy*: Rabindra Bhavan, Visva-Bhara

EINSTEIN: Our natural point of view in regard to the existence of truth apart from humanity cannot be explained or proved, but it is a belief which nobody can lack—no primitive beings even. We attribute to Truth a super-human objectivity; it is indispensable for us, this reality which is independent of our existence and our experience and our mind—though we cannot say what it means.

TAGORE: Science has proved that the table as a solid object is an appearance, and therefore that which the human mind perceives as a table would not exist if that mind were naught. At the same time it must be admitted that the fact, that the ultimate physical reality of the table is nothing but a multitude of separate revolving centres of electric forces, also belongs to the human mind.

In the apprehension of truth there is an eternal conflict between the universal human mind and the same mind confined in the individual. The perpetual process of reconciliation is being carried on in our science and philosophy, and in our ethics. In any case, if there be any truth absolutely unrelated to humanity then for us it is absolutely non-existing.

It is not difficult to imagine a mind to which the sequence of things happens not in space, but only in time like the sequence of notes in music. For such a mind its conception of reality is akin to the musical reality in which Pythagorean geometry can have no meaning. There is the reality of paper, infinitely different from the reality of literature. For the kind of mind possessed by the moth, which eats that paper, literature is absolutely non-existent, yet for Man's mind literature has a greater value of truth than the paper itself. In a similar manner, if there be some truth which has no sensuous or rational relation to the human mind it will ever remain as nothing so long as we remain human beings.

EINSTEIN: Then I am more religious than you are!

TAGORE: My religion is in the reconciliation of the Super-personal Man, the Universal human spirit, in my own individual being. This has been the subject of my Hibbert Lectures, which I have called 'The Religion of Man'.

14 July 1930

II

TAGORE: I was discussing with Dr Mendel today the new mathematical discoveries which tell us that in the realm of infinitesimal atoms chance has its play: the drama of existence is not absolutely in character.

EINSTEIN: The facts that make science tend toward this view do not say good-bye to causality.

TAGORE: Maybe, not; but it appears that the idea of causality is not in the elements, that some other force builds up with them an organized universe.

EINSTEIN: One tries to understand in the higher plane how the order is. The order is there, where the big elements combine and guide existence; but in the minute elements this order is not perceptible.

TAGORE: Thus duality is in the depths of existence—the contradiction of free impulse and the directive will which works upon it and evolves an orderly scheme of things.

EINSTEIN: Modern physics would not say they are contradictory. Clouds look one from a distance, but, if you see them near, they show themselves in disorderly drops of water.

TAGORE: I find a parallel in human psychology. Our passions and desires are unruly, but our character subdues these elements into a harmonious whole. Does something similar to this happen in the physical world? Are the elements rebellious, dynamic with individual impulse? And is there a principle in the physical world which dominates them and puts them into an orderly organization?

EINSTEIN: Even the elements are not without statistical order; elements of radium will always maintain their specific order, now and ever onward, just as they have done all along. There is, then, a statistical order in the elements.

TAGORE: Otherwise the drama of existence would be too desultory. It is the constant harmony of chance and determination which makes it eternally new and living.

EINSTEIN: I believe that whatever we do or live for has its causality; it is good, however, that we cannot look through it.

TAGORE: There is in human affairs an element of elasticity also—some freedom within a small range, which is for the expression of our personality. It is like the musical system in India which is not so rigidly fixed as is the western music. Our composers give a certain definite outline, a system of melody and rhythmic arrangement, and within a certain limit the player can improvise upon it. He must be one with the law of that particular melody, and then he can give spontaneous expression to his musical feeling within the prescribed regulation. We praise the composer for his genius in creating a foundation along with a superstructure of melodies, but we expect from the player his own skill in the creation of variations of melodic flourish and ornamentation. In creation we follow the central law of existence, but, if we do not cut ourselves adrift from it, we can have sufficient freedom within the limits of our personality for the fullest self-expression.

EINSTEIN: That is only possible where there is a strong artistic tradition in music to guide the people's mind. In Europe music has come too far away from popular art and popular feeling and has become something like a secret art with conventions and traditions of its own.

TAGORE: So you have to be absolutely obedient to this too complicated music. In India the measure of a singer's freedom is in his own creative personality. He can sing the composer's song as his own, if he has the power creatively to assert himself in his interpretation of the general law of the melody which he is given to interpret.

EINSTEIN: It requires a very high standard of art fully to realize the great idea in

the original music, so that one can make variations upon it. In our country the variations are often prescribed.

TAGORE: If in our conduct we can follow the law of goodness, we can have real liberty of self-expression. The principle of conduct is there, but the character which makes it true and individual is our own creation. In our music there is a duality of freedom and prescribed order.

EINSTEIN: Are the words of a song also free? I mean to say, is the singer at liberty to add his own words to the song which he is singing?

TAGORE: Yes. In Bengal we have a kind of song—*Kirtan* we call it—which gives freedom to the singer to introduce parenthetical comments, phrases not in the original song. This occasions great enthusiasm, since the audience is constantly thrilled by some beautiful, spontaneous sentiment added by the singer.

EINSTEIN: Is the metrical form quite severe?

TAGORE: Yes, quite. You cannot exceed the limits of versification; the singer in all his variations must keep the rhythm and the time, which is fixed. In European music you have a comparative liberty about time, but not about melody. But in India we have freedom of melody with no freedom of time.

EINSTEIN: Can the Indian music be sung without words? Can one understand a song without words?

TAGORE: Yes, we have songs with unmeaning words, sounds which just help to act as carriers of the notes. In North India music is an independent art, not the interpretation of words and thoughts, as in Bengal. The music is very intricate and subtle and is a complete world of melody by itself.

EINSTEIN: It is not polyphonic?

TAGORE: Instruments are used, not for harmony, but for keeping time and for adding to the volume and depth. Has melody suffered in your music by the imposition of harmony?

EINSTEIN: Sometimes it does suffer very much. Sometimes the harmony swallows up the melody altogether.

TAGORE: Melody and harmony are like lines and colours in pictures. A simple linear picture may be completely beautiful; the introduction of colour may make it vague and insignificant. Yet colour may, by combination with lines, create great pictures so long as it does not smother and destroy their value.

EINSTEIN: It is a beautiful comparison; line is also much older than colour. It seems that your melody is much richer in structure than ours. Japanese music seems to be so.

TAGORE: It is difficult to analyse the effect of eastern and western music on our minds. I am deeply moved by the western music—I feel that it is great, that it is vast in its structure and grand in its composition. Our own music touches me more deeply by its fundamental lyrical appeal. European music is epic in character; it has a broad background and is Gothic in its structure.

EINSTEIN: Yes, yes, that is very true. When did you first hear European music?

TAGORE: At seventeen, when I first came to Europe I came to know it intimately, but even before that time I had heard European music in our own household. I had heard the music of Chopin and others at an early age.

EINSTEIN: There is a question we Europeans cannot properly answer, we are so used to our own music. We want to know whether our own music is a conventional or a fundamental human feeling; whether to feel consonance and dissonance is natural or a convention which we accept.

TAGORE: Somehow the piano confounds me. The violin pleases me much more.

EINSTEIN: It would be interesting to study the effects of European music on an Indian who had never heard it when he was young.

TAGORE: Once I asked an English musician to analyse for me some classical music and explain to me what elements make it the beauty of a piece.

EINSTEIN: The difficulty is that the really good music, whether of the East or of the West, cannot be analysed.

TAGORE: Yes, and what deeply affects the hearer is beyond himself.

EINSTEIN: The same uncertainty will always be there about everything fundamental in our experience, in our reaction to art, whether in Europe or in Asia. Even the red flower I see before me on your table may not be the same to you and me.

TAGORE: And yet there is always going on the process of reconciliation between them, the individual taste conforming to the universal standard.

CONVERSATIONS IN RUSSIA

FOR A LONG time Rabindranath Tagore had been anxious to visit Russia. In 1926 received an invitation from the Soviet Government, but was taken seriously ill with influenza at Vienna towards the end of October. It was already late autumn, and news of an early winter was coming in from all sides. Vienna itself was under snow. It was with the greatest difficulty that he was finally persuaded to give up the idea. In 1929, on his way back from Canada he intended to go across Russia by the Trans-Siberian Railway, but unfortunately ill health again prevented him from doing so.

In 1930 his long felt desire was fulfilled. While he was in Berlin that year, the great Soviet educationist Mr Lunacharsky came there to invite the poet to Russia. The poet accepted the invitation. On the 11th of September, 1930 he arrived in Moscow, accompanied by Dr Harry Timbres, Miss Margot Einstein of Berlin, the poet's grandnephew Saumyendranath Tagore and his secretaries, Aryanayakam and Amiya Chakravarty. The poet was received at the white Russian Baltic Station by the representatives of the USSR Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries: D. Novomirsky, head of the Anglo-American Section; A. Eshukoff, head of the Exhibition Department, and M.

Dobin, head of the, Foreign Reception Bureau, and by prominent members of the Moscow Writers' Association, including the author Alexiev, the eminent constructivist poetess Vera Iber and others. A reception was arranged at midday on Friday, the 12th September in the VOKS building. Prof. F.N. Petroff, President of the Society, explained the aims and objects of the new experiments in Russia. The following notes of the conversation will give some idea of the topics discussed by the Poet.

CONVERSATION AT THE VOKS RECEPTION

PETROFF: Please excuse me for my inability to speak your language. I am glad to welcome you to our country. It is a great inspiration to us that you take such interest in our new order of civilization in the Soviet Union.

TAGORE: I thank you for your cordial welcome. I know you are making a tremendous experiment in this country. I am not in a position to give any considered opinion about it, but I cannot help expressing my admiration for your courage, for your keen enthusiasm to build up your social structure on the equitable basis of human freedom. It is wonderful to feel that you are interested not merely in your national problems but in the good of humanity as a whole.

PETROFF: This rebuilding of society on a basis of equality is an inevitable consequence of the abundance of tribes and castes in Russia. We have had to deal with this baffling problem of heterogeneity all through our history. The attempt to realize that our differences are negligible in the light of a common need and a common urge of civilization has imparted great enthusiasm to all our workers, and we fervently believe that we shall be able to offer definite solutions to many of the outstanding problems which have troubled humanity in the past.

TAGORE: By offering education to vast multitudes of your people who were kept imprisoned in the darkness of ignorance, millions of human beings who never got any chance to realize their humanity, and were obliged to yield to exploitation and oppression in order to preserve their precarious existence, you have made an invaluable contribution to human progress. You are creating a new world of humanity, and for the first time in history, acknowledging the dignity of man in your scheme of practical work.

PETROFF: We believe, however, that the spread of mass education can only be possible under suitable economic conditions. It is because we could gain full control of the economic resources of Russia that we have been able to spend so much for education and for various forms of cultural work that have now been introduced for the first time in a vast agricultural country.

TAGORE: That is true. No aspect of life can in reality be deducted from another. Education is necessarily connected with economic problems.

PETROFF: After gaining economic control, our first care has been to educate the children before they go to school. We bring them up from their very first days in a properly organized social environment, which itself is at once

the basis and the superstructure of all educational systems. Nor do we neglect the parents of the children; we carry on a vigorous educational movement among adults. In this way we hope to develop a new race of men with a free and independent outlook, co-operating for the mutual good of society as a whole.

TAGORE: Don't you believe that much of what you do today has behind it the accumulated forces of active reaction against the oppressive regime of the past government? It is wonderful that this reaction should have been translated into higher forms of activity and not dissipated in mere retaliatory politics. You have of course, as I am sure you will freely admit, made grievous mistakes at the time of your first accession to power, but the sense of responsibility that this power brought along with it has quickly given you a full sense of reality, and you seem to lose no opportunity now of merging your racial individualities into a harmonious social existence. I, as an educationist, am concerned vitally with all the great movements you have initiated for the good of the peasant masses. As you know, our country, like yours, is an agricultural one, and we have amongst our peasantry all the obstacles of ignorance, of bigotry, and superstition that you have already overcome to a great extent with the help of education. If we can learn from your experiences in this line, we shall be able to grapple with rural problems in India in an efficient manner.

PETROFF: Our first educational weapon is to launch an intensive campaign in the villages directed to make the peasants conscious of their own dignity, of their inherent rights of which they had been deprived for so long, and of all the possibilities that lie open to them. We are not ashamed to be propagandists, and our propaganda itself is educative. It is scientific, it is human, it is moral, and carries all the fervour of social service that we are capable of igniting in our minds and hearts.

Whatever line of work we undertake today has always the welfare of the people as its direct inspiration. We do not want to enjoy any exclusive privileges at all, because that kind of enjoyment is anti-social and therefore non-human, perhaps even inhuman. All the storehouses of wisdom, of joy, of well-ordered social benefits are open to every one of us, because everyone of us has equal human rights to them.

TAGORE: I have come to study your educational methods, to draw strength from the atmosphere of creative efforts which surrounds you. I have my educational colony in India which is linked up with the surrounding villages. With meagre means I and my colleagues there try our best to serve our neighbours, to invite them to our festivals, to supply them with medicine, to demonstrate to them the efficiency of up-to-date methods of agriculture. Whatever you can show me, therefore, of your educational work will be of very great use to me indeed. I wish I had more time and energy to study your work properly, but I shall do all that I can to utilize my visit to your country.

PETROFF: Sir, your name is known and loved in the whole of Russia. We have over 25 current volumes of your works, and a vast public reads them. We shall be only too happy and proud to show you whatever you want to see of our work, and we feel sure you will appreciate our educational activities.

AT THE FEDERATION OF SOVIET WRITERS, MOSCOW

ON THE EVENING of the same day a concert was arranged jointly by VOKS and the Moscow Association of Writers in honour of Rabindranath Tagore at the club house of the Association. Among those present were Prof. P.S. Kogan (President of the Academy of Arts); Prof. Pinkevitch (Director of the Second Moscow State University); Albert Rhys Williams, the writer, Madame Litvinova and a number of eminent Soviet writers, such as Ognyed (author of Diary of Kostya Ryaptseva, Life of a Soviet School Boy), Vera Inber, Fedor Gladkov (who wrote the much-talked-of *Cement*); Eseev (poet, a former futurist and close adherent of Vladimir Mayakovsky) and others. Prof. Petroff opened the proceedings with the following speech of welcome:

Representatives of Soviet public life, art and science see among them today Rabindranath Tagore, one of the greatest of living poets and thinkers.

Rabindranath Tagore is one of those men who have followed with the closest attention and interest the great events developing during the last ten years in the history of humanity. It is obvious that one so gifted with spiritual and poetic insight could not have gone away without seeing this most important page of human history, that page which bears the name of the great October Revolution.

We, who have taken part in the October Revolution and have assisted at the construction of new forms of human culture, extend a warm welcome to one who has come amongst us, as a profound thinker, to study our culture, to study our strivings for the renewal of human society, and thus of human personality itself.

Rabindranath Tagore is an active worker on the forefront of popular education, as well as a poet and thinker. He is endeavouring, in the educational institution founded by himself in Santiniketan (near Calcutta), to solve problems regarding the formation of the human personality. This branch of work occupies an important place in his activities and makes great demands upon his energy and strength. He has come here to learn about the endeavours of our country, to understand how, in the new and revolutionary conditions, the human personality, destined to advance human progress in economic, social and cultural conditions which are all new, expands and formulates. Rabindranath Tagore wishes to understand how the human personality can in the conditions of Socialist reconstruction, perfect itself and become a varitable creative force in the spheres of art, science, and in human progress of every description.

We welcome visits by friends who come with an open mind and a pure

soul to our country to study our efforts, to try and understand the aspirations of the masses towards a new human life, a new and free system for the perfection of human nature.

Many are the lies which have been spoken and written about us, and monstrous are the rumours industriously spread abroad. There are many who say that culture is languishing in our country, and others that culture has perished altogether in Soviet Russia. It is also said that the Bolsheviks, after accomplishing the greatest revolution in the world, have been unable to cope with the problems thence arising, and have been unable to substitute that which they have destroyed with something else of equal value.

We have only one answer to all this: come and see for yourself, and meditate upon what we are doing, try to understand our aspirations, study our achievements—not only in the spheres of economics, of construction, of industry and agriculture—but our achievements in the solution of the most subtle problems of human creation in the spheres of pedagogics, of art, of poetry and of the science of social life. Realize the special feature introduced into this creative work when the collective, the massed, the emancipated people came forward to replace the isolated aspirations of the individual, with the whole collective force of goodwill of their national creative powers.

Our Soviet culture is of interest at the present stage of revolutionary creation inasmuch as, emancipating both materially and spiritually the many races inhabiting the USSR, it has enabled the million-strong mass of the backward peoples, as well as the toilers of Russian extraction, to apply their powers and their energy to the progress of all humanity, and these backward peoples are now taking the most active part in that historical movement which we in our country call Socialistic construction. Anyone who has seen the Uzbek theatre and heard Turkoman music, anyone acquainted with the creative manifestations of our Caucasian people, and with the achievements in art and science in the Ukraine, must realize that the problems of mass culture are solved in our country, not by one, but by many nationalities, by the numerous races in the USSR who are progressing, in their own national forms, towards the creation of an international, free, proletarian culture. This in itself is bound to make an impression upon all peoples aspiring towards liberation. All the peoples and races beyond the territory of the USSR are following with profound attention and interest the way in which the USSR peoples, liberated from the Tsarist regime and the yoke of a religious-police system, and proceeding towards free creative work in new, in Socialist economic conditions, are living and carrying out their affairs.

We believe that our friend, Rabindranath Tagore, who has come to visit us, will approach our intellectual processes and endeavour to understand what is going on in our country with that serious thoughtfulness which he has shown in all his creative work. We rejoice when a great personality of the contemporary historical moment, such as Tagore, comes to us in true fellowship and speaks with perfect frankness of what he has seen and felt in our Union.

Permit me, in the name of VOKS, whose only aim is to demonstrate to the whole world, as impartially, vividly and fairly as possible, all that is going on in our Union, to welcome you; permit me, as a member of the representatives of science and in the name of the representatives of the artistic circles grouped around our Society, to welcome you as a close friend, and to hope that you will understand us and express in fairness and justice your opinion of our Socialistic reconstruction to the whole world.

He was followed by Profs. Kogan and Pinkevitch and by the Soviet author Shaklar, the latter speaking on behalf of the Moscow Writers' Association.

REPLY BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I THANK YOU for the honour you have done me in inviting me to your country and also to this feast this evening where I have had the opportunity of meeting with some of the greatest representatives of intellectual life in your country. Unfortunately, I do not understand your language, and the language in which I am speaking is neither yours nor mine. I will therefore be brief.

I have come to this country to learn. I want to know how you are solving in your country the great problem: the world problem of civilization. Civilization today has taken man far away from his normal humanity. It has torn individual personality away from society. Modern civilization has given birth to an extraordinarily artificial life; it has created diseases, evoked specific sufferings and given rise to many anomalies. I do not know what ought to be done to cure modern civilization of its ills. I do not know if the path you have chosen in this country for the solution of this problem is the right one. History will judge the extent to which you have been successful. I do not wish to criticize you. I am filled with enthusiasm for the way in which you have, for the first time, afforded to all the opportunity of acquiring education. For this I would applaud you. I am myself profoundly interested in problems of education. My idea, my dream, has been to create free human beings who should be surrounded by an environment of creative work. Under modern civilization the human personality is imprisoned in a cage, shut off from the rest of society. In your country you have put an end to this evil. I have heard from many and am beginning myself to be convinced, that your ideas are very much like my own dream for a full life for the individual, for complete education. In your country you are not only giving the individual scientific education, you are making of him a creative personality. In this way you are realizing the greatest, the highest ideal of humanity. For the first time in history you are giving the hidden wealth of the human mind a chance to express itself. I thank you for this with all my heart.

I myself have been working in my own way in my own institutions, and my idea of education is that it should be imparted in contact with life itself; it should be a part of life. By living a true life one can have proper education, and not through the complete withdrawal from the realities of life which you so often see in the colleges and schools in the civilized world, those brick-built prisons in which children are denied the true goods of life.

Since I have come to this place I have been able to realize that your ideal of education is very similar to mine, that the people are living a complete life through which their mind is prepared to receive education in its full richness and not merely to hoard isolated facts of scientific instruction or information. You have been stimulating the people's mind for creative work which is the highest privilege of man. It has not been possible for me to give effect to this idea in an adequate manner in my own institutions. In this country you have been able to give it a proper form, and you have succeeded in giving the movement a great impetus. I realize that it will be an immortal gift to humanity from your country, this idea of education for everybody.

I can only thank you in these few brief words. I am still waiting to see in detail something of the work of education which you are carrying out in your various institutions. Unfortunately, I have very little time to spare, and also I cannot forget the fact, I am reminded of it every day—that I am no longer young. Yet I hope I shall be able to see something which I can carry back to my own land in my memory and which will help us in our own work. I offer you my heartiest thanks for giving me this great opportunity to learn from you about your pioneer work in the field of people's education.

THE FIRST PIONEER COMMUNE

On the evening of the 14th September the Poet visited the first Pioneer Commune, Isigansky Ploschand, Iovarischsky Pereulok, No. 25, Moscow.

On reaching the staircase of the Commune Building the Poet was greeted by pioneer songs, the boys and girls standing in line on both sides of the steps and joining in the chorus. After the Poet had taken his seat in the central hall, a young pioneer girl of fourteen read a message of welcome in English.

REPLY TO ADDRESS OF WELCOME

My friends, I am deeply touched by the warm welcome you have accorded to me. As I look at your bright young faces full of hope and a glorious future, I feel stirred to my depths and know that the purpose of my visit to Russia is realized. For, believe me, I have come here, not so much to see what you have done and are doing now, which is great, but to visualize the future which you are creating with such fervour for the welfare of the whole of humanity. In every country I visit I want to come in close touch with the young who have the great privilege of looking ahead and of building up with their lives the basis of a new order of civilization. You know I am a poet, and my work is to give expression to living impulses and youthful hopes, and so I can be one with you today in your dreams of the future.

Besides, I can come close to you because I have spent a great part of my life with children. I have my school in Bengal where I live with them, and where I try to bring them up in an atmosphere of complete life. My idea is to provide them with all possible opportunities for the development of a creative life, and

I trust them in their free initiative to make the best use of them.

I believe in freedom, in that freedom which naturally takes upon itself responsibilities in order to express adequately the deeper human impulses of love and service. I have given this freedom to the children of my school, and I am interested to know how you young pioneers are using the freedom you possess for the good of your community and what methods you follow to give expression to the ideal of the new age which you have realized in your country. I hope this evening to know in detail about your work and your way of life.

I thank you warmly for your reception, and I assure you that I feel very happy indeed to be here with you this evening.

TALK WITH THE CHILDREN

A BOY: We are unlike the bourgeois scouts. They want rewards, they want military honours, they want everything for themselves individually, not for the good of every one. We pioneers want nothing for ourselves. Whatever good we do for everybody is also of benefit to us.

TAGORE: You will be interested to know that we have in our school *Brati-balakas* and *Brati-balikas*, two organizations for boys and girls which are like yours. I do not believe in Boy Scouts' and Girl Guides' organizations because they have to take all kinds of oaths, and then, as you say, there are amongst those organizations some wrong notions of a military kind. Our boys and girls go out to serve the villagers, to put out fires when fires break out in the neighbourhood, they distribute medicine, they show the villagers how to live properly and well. I am very happy indeed to know that you enjoy doing service of this kind because, as you say, by helping the village people you are helping yourselves, you are serving the whole country.

THE CENTRAL PEASANTS' HOUSE

ON THE MORNING of the 16th September the Poet visited the Central Peasants' House.

On his arrival at the Central Peasants' House Rabindranath Tagore was received in the main clubroom by the Superintendent of the House, the House Council, and some 150 peasants who were boarding there at the time, representatives from the nearest and the far-distant points of the Soviet Union.

The small meeting of welcome that followed was opened by the Superintendent who explained to the peasants that the Poet had come to visit them in order personally to meet them and to learn about them. The Superintendent welcomed the Poet on behalf of the assembled peasants, and hoped that this first meeting between the great Indian Poet and the Soviet peasants would lay the foundation for a still deeper contact between the peasant masses of both countries.

In his brief reply the Poet emphasized the importance and significance

of the strenuous work being carried on by the peasants and workers of the Soviet Republic in the building up of a new life, a new humanity. He expressed his admiration for the great spirit of good will which inspired this new effort, this great undertaking which demanded the utmost self-sacrifice and self-denial on the part of the Soviet population.

TALK WITH THE PEASANTS

A NUMBER OF questions were then put to the Poet, and he answered them to the full satisfaction of his audience.

QUESTION: What is the position of the National Policy in India today and what is the reason for the strife between Hindus and Mussalmans?

TAGORE: I find from personal observations that this strife has been going on for the past twenty-five years only. Before this period there was, as far as I can recall—*and I have lived for many years in the village*—no such animosity and enmity between them. I am certain that this strife has been accentuated by the overwhelming ignorance and illiteracy of the Indian peasants. These feelings of religious hostility can, in my opinion, be liquidated only by the introduction of mass education. The possibility of educating the masses, unfortunately, does not exist today in India.

QUESTION: Have you written anything about the peasants in your works, and what are your views regarding the future of the Indian peasants?

TAGORE: Not only have I written about peasants but I am working among them, endeavouring, as far as I can, to educate them. I am not only educating children in my schools, but also carrying on this work in the surrounding villages. This work is, of course, of a modest nature in comparison with the gigantic educational work that is being carried on in the Soviet Union.

QUESTION: What is your opinion of the collectivization that is being developed in this country?

TAGORE: I realize the great importance of this work (collectivization) that is being carried out by the peasants, but I cannot answer this question as, unfortunately, I know very little about it. Lack of knowledge of how this problem is being solved in the Soviet Union is one of the chief reasons of my visit to your country.

QUESTION: What is known in India concerning our collectivization and about the work of our country generally?

TAGORE: Unfortunately, very little, as the existing press in India as well as in other countries is reticent and untrustworthy about all facts concerning your country.

QUESTION: Have you heard before of the existence of the Peasants' Houses and of their work?

TAGORE: No, only since my coming to Moscow have I learnt of the existence of these welfare centres for the peasants. Now I would like to hear from the

peasants at this meeting of their own opinion about collectivization and its full significance for the agricultural population.

A young Ukrainian peasant of the name of Semenchiko, about 32 years of age, replied: 'I am working on a Collective Farm which was organized two years ago. Our Collective farm consists of big gardens from which we supply canning factories with vegetables and wheat.We have an 8-hour working day and each fifth day is a holiday.' (The 5-day week is now introduced throughout the country and works under the name of 'the uninterrupted working week').

'The average crop is twice as large as that of any of the neighbouring individual peasants. In the beginning about 150 individual farms were merged into the common unit. In the spring of 1929, half of them left us owing to faulty understanding and misguided application of the instructions given by Comrade Stalin (the General Secretary of the All-Union Communist Party). He had emphasized that the fundamental principle of collectivization was *Voluntary Social Participation* in the organization of these collective farms. This basic principle was not correctly understood in a number of rural areas, and due to its inadequate application and the resulting bureaucratic mistakes, many peasants withdrew from the collective farms. But now, owing to supplementary explanations and the courageous efforts of the remaining collectivists, about a fourth of those that had left have returned. And today we are stronger than ever. We are building new living houses for our members, a new dining-hall and a school.'

On this same question further information was advanced by a peasant woman from Siberia. She had been a member of a Commune Farm for ten years. She asked the Poet to bear in mind the intimate connexion between the women's movement and the Collective Farms. She explained how the woman of today was more self-reliant than her sisters of even a decade ago. She said: 'We have specially organized brigades of women collectivists which travel from one part of the country to the other, working among the women, rousing them up, and pointing out to them in detail the economic and cultural advantages of collectivization. In order to lighten the strenuous life of the women collectivists in their farm work, and with a view to making their status truly equal to that of their men comrades, there are in every Collective Farm a nursery, a kindergarten, and a communal kitchen.'

A farm-labourer from the famous State Farm (Sovkhoz) 'Gigant' also described how the collectivist idea was being realized in Russia. 'This farm embraces 100,000 hectare of farm land. Last year, we had 3,000 workers. This year that figure will slightly decrease although the output per man will increase. This is due to the introduction of advanced methods of agriculture such as scientific manuring, the use of tractors and other machinery. We have now more than 300 tractors. We also have an 8-hour working day. Those of us who work longer receive overtime allowances. During the winter months when there is insufficient work for all the workers, some two-thirds of them are permitted to leave the farm to seek work in the cities (building, road-mending

etc.). During their period of work in the towns they will receive one-third of their summer wage from the farm and their families continue to reside in the rooms given them at the farm.'

TAGORE: I should like to know the opinion of some of the individual peasants who are here regarding the Collective Farm, and the views of anyone here present concerning the principle of private property and whether they regret their surrender of their individual farm-holdings.

A brief pause ensued before the peasants got up to reply to this question. A number of them confessed that they entertained orthodox views on this subject as the idea of collectivization was not clear to their minds; still more of them were shy and embarrassed.

Eventually, a peasant from Bashkir Republic (Central Asia) spoke up. He was still an individual farmer, but in a short time he would enter the neibhbouring Collective Farm. Pointing out his reasons for this desire he said: 'The collective method of land exploitation yields a far better and a higher ratio of crop than the individual system. We need machinery for the better cultivation of the land. We individuals cannot afford to purchase machines. Further, even if we owned machines, we could not cultivate the small strips of land that each individual peasant owns. Only through the collectivization of these small plots into large collective farms can we really begin to build a new order of social existence.'

A woman peasant from the Tamboy region (some 150 miles south of Moscow) then took the floor and said: 'There can be no doubt of the superiority of life in Collective Farms to that outside them, and I do not think anyone regrets this change of conditions.' Several other peasants confirmed this opinion. Someone from the audience cried out, 'How can we regret changing from our former small, dirty huts to our present large, sanitary, hygienic collectivist houses?'

TAGORE: I had the pleasure of meeting yesterday M. Karakhan who said that he was particularly proud of the work done by the Soviet Government and the Soviet social organizations in the sphere of the emancipation of women and the education and upbringing of children. In my conversation with him, I expressed my doubts regarding the future of family life, and even of its existence.

He explained that the Soviet authorities had no explicit desire to destroy family life. The state was trying to assume greater responsibilities for the bringing up of children. If this led indirectly to the extinction of family life, that would only prove that family life had no survival value for the future civilization of mankind. I should like to hear what your opinions are upon this matter, and whether you believe that family life will continue to exist under the collectivist social system.

The young Ukrainian Semenchiko, who had spoken before, replied: 'What I will tell you will show whether family life is being destroyed or not under the new social regime. When my father was alive, he used to work six months of the year in the cities and for the remaining six months (in summer) I was sent with my brothers and sisters to work as shepherds for the wealthy peasants, and therefore we seldom saw our father. Now, I see my son everyday after he returns from the kindergarten, and we are the best of friends.'

Another peasant, a woman, also spoke, stating it as her opinion that the introduction of creches and kindergartens has really helped husband and wife to reach a better understanding and happier relations. They fostered the growth of a deeper sense of responsibility and appreciation of their duty as parents.

A young Caucasian woman who had been living, excepting for the last four years, in a small village in the Caucasian mountains, spoke with great pathos and understanding. Addressing the interpretor she said: 'Tell the Great Poet, Rabindranath Tagore, that we women living in the Soviet Union, and particularly in the Trans-Caucasian Republics, consider that we are really free and happy only since the October Revolution. The dark days of the past before 1917 have now become distant. We are building up a new life in which we are participating fully, conscious of our duties and responsibilities. We are prepared to go to the extreme length of self-denial for the realization of the ideal we cherish in our hearts. Let the Great Poet know that the various peoples and nationalities of the Soviet Union wish him to convey to the people of India their warmest greetings and sympathy in their dark hours.'

TAGORE: Our people are still ignorant, our women are helpless, they need the light of the new age in order to find their place in the world of humanity.

The same woman from the Caucasus said: 'I would leave my home, my children, all that I have, in order to be able to work amongst your people and to help them!'

TAGORE: Who is that Mongolian-looking young man on the left?

THE INTERPRETER: He is the son of a collective farmer in the Kirghisian Republic. He has come to Moscow to study in the Higher Textile Industrial Technicum. In three years' time he will become an engineer and return to his Republic to work on a big plant built since the Revolution.

The Superintendent of the Central Peasants' House in closing this meeting said: 'The visit of the Poet to the Soviet Union is of the greatest importance. The coming of such an eminent personage to this country, such an outstanding figure of the cultural world, means a new and bigger step in the mutual contacts between the toiling peoples of India and the Soviet Union. We hope the Poet will assist in the spreading of genuine and objective

information in India concerning the efforts and activities of the workers and peasants of the First Workers' and Peasants' Republic in History.' The meeting terminated with the singing of 'The International'.

EXHIBITION OF DRAWINGS

THE EXHIBITION OF the paintings of the Poet was opened at the State Moscow Museum of New Western Art on the afternoon of the 17th September. In his introductory speech Prof. Petroff said, 'Today we are experiencing the pleasure of meeting Rabindranath Tagore, not only as a great poet and philosopher, but also as an outstanding painter of the day. We greet the great Poet and Painter who has come to our country to observe our building of a new economic, political and social order. We particularly appreciate his visit as a man of great vision and deep intuitive understanding of life's essential realities.'

Prof. Sidorov spoke on the essence of the creative art of the Poet as a painter. Prof. Ettingov of the People's Commissariat of Education expressed his warmest welcome on behalf of the Commissariat.

Prof. Kristy, the Director of the Tretiakov-Gallery in his speech of welcome said:

'We greet you, revered philosopher and writer, in the name of the greatest museum and region-study department of Moscow, and in the name of the People's Commissariat of Education, directing the affairs of art in the Soviet Union.

'We all know Rabindranath Tagore, philosopher and writer, but it was a pleasant surprise for us to learn that he is also a painter. It is with special pleasure that we have arranged an exhibition of his work in order to acquaint our intellectuals and our working masses with them. We are glad that our guest has come to us at the moment when his own native land is on the eve of emancipation, and that he has come to us when we are ourselves making heroic efforts for the reconstruction of our material and spiritual world.

'We believe that by acquainting himself with our country he will take back much that is useful for his own. For ourselves, we believe that our close contact with this great representative of an old and cultured nation and the consequent fertilization of our own ideas will result in far-reaching benefits for us both.'

Reply by Rabindranath Tagore: 'I return warm thanks for the welcome extended to me. I appreciate intensely this opportunity to get in touch with some of the best minds and best hearts of your country. My most intimate gift to you are my pictures and I hope that in them we shall truly meet each other. Only this has made me venture to bring my pictures here and exhibit them. I myself value them chiefly because they enable me to get into direct touch with the Western people. Words have failed me, the help of the interpreter has created further distractions in the path of our mutual understanding—let me hope that my pictures will be the messengers of thought between us and bring us close to each other on the plane of harmonious understanding.'

In his concluding remarks Prof. Kristy said:

'We are sincerely grateful for what we have just seen. When we came here we knew Rabindranath Tagore merely as a great philosopher and a poet and supposed that for him art would be merely the hobby of a great man. But the more we acquaint ourselves with his paintings, the more we are struck with the creative skill shown in his pictures. We consider these works to be a great manifestation of artistic life, and that his methods will be, like all high technical achievements assimilated by us from abroad, of the greatest use to our country.'

The Exhibition was very successful, and a large number of people including representatives from various art and educational institutions visited it.

TALKS WITH ART CRITICS

TAGORE: I thank you for your welcome and the words of appreciation. I know that the best communication between nations is the communication of mind and heart. The best products of each country belong to all humanity. This is the proper field of exchange—the field of culture. And I shall be only too glad to show you what I have done in this latest manifestation of my own creative mind.

It came to me all of a sudden without any training or preparation, and so it has its psychological value, I believe. In other parts of Europe I must confess, however, those who are very critical of art or products of art, have given me assurance that my pictures not only have a psychological interest, but also a higher interest of art, and they have acknowledged me as an artist, for which I feel very proud. I want now to know what you think of my attempts, because I value your opinion of art very highly indeed.

I have felt a need to bring my pictures to you also because through pictures I can come into direct touch with your mind. I cannot do this with my words owing to the barrier of language. But my pictures, they will speak to you without the medium of an interpreter.

CRITIC: What is the idea of this picture?

TAGORE: No idea. It is a picture. Ideas are in words and not in life.

CRITIC: What is remarkable in your work is the spirit of youth, and that is why these paintings are so interesting. The spirit of youth meets no difficulty in finding its proper mode of expression and your pictures have created their own technique. Have you ever painted before?

TAGORE: Never.

CRITIC: You are a first-class artist. Every new picture makes a stronger impression and the entire audience is thrilled by this. We are very interested to know when these were made?

TAGORE: These are early ones. They are mainly linear, colours come in later on.

CRITIC: Something resembling very much the works of Vrubel, whom you have never seen perhaps?

TAGORE: I do not believe I have seen any of his pictures.

CRITIC: We shall be glad to show them to you. We shall be glad to take your paintings and exhibit them as our own—as those of a Russian artist!

CRITIC: We ask whether your paintings have any names?

TAGORE: None at all. I cannot think of any names. I do not know how to describe my pictures.

CRITIC: Is this a portrait of Dante?

TAGORE: No, it is not a portrait of Dante. I did it on the steamer on my way from Japan; last year my pen followed its own impulse which led to this figure you see before you.

CRITIC: (*with regard to a picture made the day before*) An impression of Moscow?

TAGORE: Well, I did it yesterday. I do not know if Moscow has anything to do with it—perhaps it may be so, who knows!

CRITIC: We wish to express our deep pleasure. Professor Kristy says he has known you for a long time as a great poet, and here he expected to see some productions of a dilettante-artist, but what he has seen has amazed him. He was struck by the virility of the paintings he had the pleasure to see. He is sure that your paintings represent a very great event in the history of art. He believes your pictures will have a deep effect on our artists and give them a fuller sense of life.

TAGORE: It gives me great delight to be able to gain your approbation and to know that this came from the expert critics and artists of your land. I almost feel vain about my productions. My pictures being too new, I am not yet accustomed to this, and I always feel the greatest delight when they are praised because I have some diffidence in not having any standard within myself, and have to rely upon those who have a great background of artistic experience.

TALKS WITH STUDENTS

IN MOSCOW MANY distinguished scholars like Prof. Veltman, Prof. Shor and others came to see him, and as usual he had a large number of interviews with scientific workers and students. Notes of conversations with students kept by Dr. Timbres are given below.

TAGORE: I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity of coming into close touch with you.

But I do not know how to have proper communication with you. Through translations we cannot say very much. I do not feel encouraged to talk in English about any subject which is important and serious. I would like to know about your aspirations and also if you still have any misgivings about the society under which you are working and growing up. But these are serious questions which cannot be answered through translations. If you have any curiosity to know about anything which I am doing or any other subject concerning India, I shall be glad to answer your questions.

MARIA STEINHAUS: Before I ask you a question I would like to greet you in the name of the scientific workers of Moscow and tell you how glad we are to meet you. Your famous name is known all over our country, and we know

that you are interested in our schools and educational work. And our comrades would be glad and happy to show you our work.

I have heard that yesterday you spoke about your educational work in India, and I would like to know how you have combined education with the realities of life.

'You ought to know one thing—that I am by nature a poet. From my very young days, my only vocation was to express my ideas in verse, give shape to my dreams in my poems.

'What was it that impelled me to take up this work for which I am not naturally fit?

'When I was young, as usual, I was sent to a school. Some of you may have read from the translation of my Reminiscences about the misadventures I had when I began my career as a student in a school. It was a miserable life, which became absolutely intolerable to me. At that time I did not have the capacity to analyse the reason why I suffered; but then when I grew up, it became quite clear to me what it was that hurt me so deeply to be compelled to attend my class in that school where my parents sent me.

'I have my natural love for life, for nature, and for my surroundings where I have my dear ones; and to be snatched away from these natural surroundings with which I had all my deeper life of relationship, and to be sent as an exile to the school, to the class with its bare white walls, and its stare of dead eyes, frightened me every day. When I was once inside these walls, I did not feel natural. It was a fragment torn away from life, and this caused me intense misery because I was uprooted from my own world and sent to surroundings which were dead and unsympathetic, disharmonious and monotonously dull.

'It was not possible for the mind of a child to be able to receive anything in those cheerless surroundings, in the environment of dead routine. And the teachers were like living gramophones, repeating the same lessons day by day in a dull manner. My mind refused to accept anything from my teachers. With all my heart and soul I repudiated what was put before me. And then there were some teachers who were utterly unsympathetic, and did not understand at all the sensitive soul of a young boy, and tried to punish him for the mistakes he made. Such teachers in their stupidity did not know how to teach, how to impart education to a living mind. And because they failed, they punished their victim. And this was how I suffered when I was thirteen years old.

'And then I left school, and in spite of all the efforts of my guardians, I refused to go to school.

'Since then I have been educating myself, and that process is still being carried on. And whatever I have learned, I have learned outside the classes. And I believe that that was a fortunate event in my life—that avoiding the schoolmaster when I was still young. And whatever I have done in later life, if I have shown any special gift or originality, I feel certain it was owing to the fact that I did not have a respectable education drilled into me.

'I took to my own work. I retired to a solitary place near the Ganges, and

a great part of my life I lived in a houseboat, writing my poems, stories and plays, dreaming my dreams.

'I went on till I gradually became known to my own countrymen and claims were made on me from all parts of the country for writings and for various kinds of help. But I kept to my solitude for a long time. It is very difficult for me to say what it was—how the call came to me to come out of the isolation of my literary life, and live among my fellow-beings to share their life and help them in their living.

'And it is also a surprise to me how I had the courage to start an educational institution for our children, for I had no experience in this line at all. But I had confidence in myself. I knew that I had very profound sympathy for children. And about my knowledge of their psychology, I was very certain. I felt that I could help them more than the ordinary teachers.

'I selected a beautiful place, far away from the contamination of town life. I myself, in my young days, was brought up in that town, in the heart of India, Calcutta, and all the time I had a sort of homesickness for the open country where my heart, my soul, could have its true freedom. Though I had no experience of the outer world, I had in my heart a great longing to go away from my enclosure of those walls and from that huge, stony-hearted step-mother, Calcutta. I knew that the mind has its hunger for the ministrations of mother-nature, and so I selected this spot where the sky is unobstructed to the verge of the horizon. There the mind could have its fearless freedom to create its own dreams, and the seasons could come with all their colours and movements and beauty into the very heart of the human dwelling. And there I got a few children around me and I taught them. I was their companion. I sang to them. I composed musical pieces, operas and plays, and they took part in the performances. I recited to them our epics, and this was the beginning of this school. I had only about five or six students at that time. People did not have any confidence in a poet for bringing up their children and educating them. And so I had very few students to begin with.

'My idea was that education should be part of life itself, and must not be detached from it and be made into something abstract. And so when I brought these children around me, I allowed them to live a complete life. They had perfect freedom to do what they wished, as much liberty as was possible for me to give them. And in all their activities I tried to put before them something which would be interesting to them.

'I tried to arouse their interest in all things, in nature's beauty and the surrounding villages, and also in literature. I tried to educate them through play-acting, through listening to music in a natural manner, and not merely by class teaching.

'They knew when I was employed in writing a drama, and they took an intense interest as it went on and developed, and in the process of their rehearsals they acquired a real taste for literature, more than they could through formal lessons in grammar and class-teaching. And this was my method. I knew the children's mind. Their subconscious mind is more active

than the conscious one, and therefore the important thing is to surround them with all kinds of activities which could stimulate their minds and gradually arouse their interest.

'I had musical evenings—not merely music classes, and those boys who at first did not have any special love of music would, out of curiosity, listen to our songs from outside, and gradually they too were drawn into the room and their taste for music developed. I had some of the very great artists of our land, and while they went on with their work, the boys could watch them and saw day by day how those works of art developed.

'An atmosphere was created, and what was important, this atmosphere provided the students with a natural impulse to live in harmony with it. In the beginning it was easier to feel this, when I had only a few students; I was then almost their only companion and teacher and it was truly the golden age of our school. I know that the boys who had then the privilege of attending my school look back on those days with much love and longing. But as their number grew, it became more and more expensive for me to carry on the school in my own way.

'According to the old tradition of our country it was the responsibility of the teacher to give education to those who came to him to be taught, and in our country students used to have free tuition and also free lodging in their teacher's house. The teachers acknowledged their responsibility: they themselves had the privilege of being educated, and they owed it to society that they should help their students in return, and should not claim anything in the shape of fees or remuneration.

'And I also began like that. Free tuition, lodging and boarding and all necessities of life, I supplied to my students out of my own poor resources. But you can easily imagine that under modern conditions of life it was not possible to continue like this, because now you have to get the help of teachers whose salaries are high, and there are other expenses which daily seem to increase. I could not maintain the old tradition that it was the duty and the privilege of the teacher to impart education to his students, and that an educational institution was not a shop where you could buy commodities with money. I was compelled to give up this idea, and now gradually it has taken the shape of an ordinary school.

'Only I tried my best to have certain things in the school which they did not have in the orthodox schools. The teachers shared the common life with the boys, it was a community life. In the sports and festivals the teachers and the students fully co-operated with each other. It was not like a cage in which the birds are fed from the outside, but it was like a nest which students themselves co-operated in building with their own life, with their love, with their daily work, and their play.

'I believe that we still have this true to a great extent. It is difficult to maintain this atmosphere owing to the fact that my colleagues with whom I have to work were brought up in a different tradition, not having the same chance as I had to play truant when they were young. They have their own ideas

about education, and it is difficult to wholly get rid of them. And so something alien to the central ideal does creep into this institution through those who are there to help me. I had in the beginning to struggle very hard with my teachers, not with the students, as very often happens in other schools. I had to take sides with the boys when they were punished for no fault of their own, but of their teachers. I had to be firm and defend the boys, which often offended the teachers. I remember, one day, a new teacher came and when he found that some of the boys were doing their lessons up on the tree, he was furious because of this want of discipline on their part. I had to protect the boys from the schoolmaster. I told him that when these boys grew up to his age they would not have the great privilege of climbing up the trees to do their lessons; they would become more respectable and keep from mother-nature.

'But I believe that an atmosphere has been created and it is there. The school has grown. The number of students is increasing year by year, which is not always an advantage. But it cannot be helped.

'Another feature which is of later growth is that the number of girls has been increasing. The co-education system is quite a new thing in India. But it is working perfectly in my school. We have had no cause for complaint. Very often the boys and girls go out together on excursions; the boys help the girls by bringing fuel and fetching water, and the girls cook the dinners for the boys and everything is managed by mutual help. That is a great education in itself.

'There is another factor which I consider to be important. I always try to get from outside of India, from Europe and from the Far East, lecturers, who came to the school to teach and also to share the simple life of the school with our students. This contributes to the creation of a favourable atmosphere. Our boys are very natural in their relationship with the foreign guests and visitors. My idea is that the mind should find its freedom in every respect, and I am sure that our children have, through their early training, freedom from the barriers of country and race, and creeds and sects. It is always difficult to get rid of these prejudices after we grow up. It is often sedulously cultivated in our school-books, and also by the patriots who wish the boys to be proud of the exploits of their own country by running down other countries. In this way nationalistic prejudices are cultivated. With the help of my visitors from abroad I have tried my best to make our boys' minds hospitable to the guests who come to us, and I think I have been successful.

'Then there are other activities. We have in the neighbouring villages some primitive people who need our help. We have started night-schools for them and our boys go there and teach. Then we have the village work in connexion with our institution; and there our boys have the opportunity to study the conditions of our village life and to know how to help them efficiently through scientific and up-to-date methods of cultivation and of fighting diseases. To impart not merely academic information, but how to live a complete life is, according to me, the purpose of education.

'The only thing I have not been able to provide our boys with is science, owing to the enormous expense it would entail, which in a poor country like

ours is difficult to meet. I have not yet been able to arrange it. Our students and I hope that some day it will be possible for me to make up their this deficiency.

'This is the idea which I have in my mind and in spite of my lack of means, my poor resources, I have done something. Those who have been able to visit our institution can tell you how we have been helping the villages. It is not only for providing needed relief to the villages but also for the educational value of the work itself that children should be trained in the heart of such activities. The villages are the cradles of life, and if we cannot give them what is due to them, then we commit suicide. Modern civilization is depriving the villages of life-stuff, and draining away everything from the villages to the pampered towns. To counteract this I have brought my students around this village work which we have started in order to give them the proper training for helping the villagers.

'I think this is, in short, the idea which I have in mind in my school.'

VILLAGE SCHOOLS IN INDIA

QUESTION: What is the condition of women in India as compared with the position of women in this country?

TAGORE: This is a very comprehensive question.

QUESTION: What is the social origin of the generality of your pupils? Are they peasants, workers and so on?

TAGORE: In the neighbourhood of the village where we are working, we have opened a special school for the villages. You may ask why I should make such a distinction. Why should I not allow the children of the villages to come and attend the other school which is for the children of the upper class people. The reason is that these students who come from comparatively rich families, all want to pass their examinations and get their degrees in order to earn their livelihood. Therefore it is not possible to give to them the ideal kind of education. For instance, they cannot waste their time in manual training, or even in such cultural training as music and art, and they want to cram themselves for their examinations and somehow get through. I had to submit to this because otherwise there would be no chance of having a single student in my school. One of the reasons is that our country is exceedingly poor, and it is natural for these boys to want to earn their livelihood and maintain their family when they grow older, and they must have some opportunity to pass their examinations in their schools. So I had to start a parallel school where the villagers who do not have ambitions for finding government employment or employment in merchant offices, come and join. There I am trying to introduce all my methods which I consider to be absolutely necessary for a perfect education. Before long, this village school, I believe, will be the real school, the ideal school, and the other one will be neglected.

QUESTION: A representative of the literary organization of the people would like to know which are the most interesting currents in Indian literature. Are

there in India any institutions for training workers for literary activity?

TAGORE: We do not have any organized effort to help the working men to stimulate their creative activities. There have been started various night schools, but that is for the purpose of teaching them how to read and write and to get elementary information of various kinds. We cannot say that we have many schools which are of a higher class than that. One of the reasons is that we should not have any students even if we did start such a school. With some encouragement we can induce villagers to attend the night schools in order to be able just to read and write, for they consider this quite enough. Only occasionally there are a few intelligent individuals who have the ambition to join the higher classes, and pass through their examinations to get degrees. But their number is very small, and even they after passing their examinations lose touch with their village. They do not want to live in the village. They try to come to the town and take up some kind of work which they consider to be of a higher nature.

So we hardly have any institution for training the peasants or the working-men in order to do their own vocation properly in an educated manner. I think the only exception in Bengal which I may mention is this school which I have started in the neighbouring village near our institution. There the real people of the village get a proper training, a real education, not merely a smattering of some elementary subjects.

FAREWELL MEETING AT DOM SOYOUZOV

ON THE EVENING of the 24th September, the day before the Poet's departure from Moscow a big public meeting was arranged in Dom Soyouzov, the Central House of Trade Unions. This House was formerly the General Meeting Hall of the Moscow aristocracy and was known as 'Dvoryanskoye Sobraniye' in pre-revolution days. More than 2,000 persons were present. On the dais, with Rabindranath Tagore in the centre, sat the distinguished personages of Moscow including Prof. Petroff, Prof. Kogan, D. Novomirsky, A. Eshukoff and a number of eminent writers and artists.

Prof. Petroff opened the proceedings with a few words. The Soviet poet Shingalee then recited the Ode to Rabindranath Tagore which he had specially composed for the occasion.

FAREWELL SPEECH BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

I AM HIGHLY honoured at the invitation to appear in this hall and I am grateful to Dr. Petroff for the kind words he has said about me. I am thankful to the people for giving me the opportunity of knowing this country and seeing the great work which the people are doing in this land. My mission in life is education. I believe that all human problems find their fundamental solution in education. And outside of my own vocation as a poet I have accepted this responsibility to educate my people as much as lies in my individual power to

do so. I know that all the evils, almost without exception, from which my land suffers are solely owing to the utter lack of education of the people.

Poverty, pestilence, communal fights and industrial backwardness make our path of life narrow and perilous owing to the meagerness of education. And this is the reason why, in spite of my advanced age and my weak health, I gladly accepted the invitation offered to me to see how you are working out the most important problem of education in this country. I have seen, I have admired and I have envied you in your great opportunities. You will know that our condition in India is very similar to yours. She has an agricultural population which is in need of all the help and encouragement that you have given the people in this country. You know how precarious is the living which depends exclusively upon agriculture, and so how utterly necessary it is for the cultivators to have the knowledge of up-to-date methods of producing crops in order to meet the increasing demands of life.

Our people are living on the verge of perpetual famine, and do not know how to help this because they have lost their faith and confidence in their own humanity. This is the greatest misfortune of our people, three hundred millions of men and women burdened with profound ignorance, without any hope in life.

So I came to this land to see how you deal with this problem, you who have struggled against the incubus of ignorance, superstition, and apathy which were once prevalent in this land among the working-men and the peasantry. The little that I have seen has convinced me of the marvellous progress that has been made, the miracle that has been achieved. How the mental attitude of the people has been changed in such a short time, it is difficult for us to realize, we who live in the darkest shadow of ignorance and futility. It gladdens my heart to know that the people, the real people who maintain the life of society and bear the burden of civilization, are not deprived of their own rights and that they enjoy an equal share of all the advantages of a progressive community.

And I dream of the time when it will be possible for that ancient land of Aryan civilization also to enjoy the great boon of education and equal opportunities for all the people. I am thankful, truly thankful to you all who have helped me in visualising in a concrete form the dream which I have been carrying for a long time in my mind, the dream of emancipating the people's minds which have been shackled for ages. For this I thank you."

IMPRESSIONS OF MOSCOW

On the 25th September, just before the Poet's departure from Moscow a reporter from *Izvestia* came to see him. We give below the reported interview in full.

The Poet was asked to say what things in Moscow had impressed him the most.

He replied: 'The Orphans at the Home of the Young Pioneers showed great confidence in their ability to realize their ideal for a new world. Their

behaviour to me was so natural. Their conduct impressed me very deeply. Then at the Peasants' House I met the peasants. We questioned each other quite frankly. Their problems are similar to the problems of the peasants in my own country. I was deeply impressed by the attitude of mind of your peasants.

'Places which I have not been able to visit have been visited by my secretaries. My doctor tells me of the fine work you are doing in sanitation, hygiene, scientific research. You are accomplishing a great deal in these lines under conditions not nearly as favourable, economically at least, as in other countries. My secretaries tell me of your splendid work in training students of agriculture, in caring for and training the homeless children left by war and famine, and of the outstanding experiment in practical education being carried on by Mr Shatsky in his colony. Mr Shatsky did me the honour of coming to visit me. I find that the ideal of his institution I also share. I am certain that your methods of education would be of great benefit in other countries where there is so much in education that is merely academic and abstract. Yours is much more practical and therefore moral, and it is in closer touch with the varied aspects and purposes of life.'

On being asked if he would express a few words in regard to his general impressions of Moscow, the Poet replied:

'I wish to let you know how deeply I have been impressed by the amazing intensity of your energy in spreading education among masses, the most intelligent direction which you have given to this noble work and also the variety of channels that have been opened out to train their minds and senses and limbs. I appreciate it all the more keenly because I belong to that country where millions of my fellow-countrymen are denied the light that education can bring to them. For human beings all other boons that are external and superficial, that are imposed from outside, are like paints and patches that never represent the bloom of health but only disguise the anaemic skin without enriching the blood. You have recognized the truth that in extirpating all social evils one has to go to the root, which can only be done through education, and not through police batons and military brow-beating.

'But I find here certain contradictions to the great mission which you have undertaken. Certain attitudes of mind are being cultivated which are contrary to your ideal.

'I must ask you: Are you doing your ideal a service by arousing in the minds of those under your training, anger, class hatred and revengefulness against those not sharing your ideal, against those whom you consider to be your enemies? True, you have to fight against obstacles, you have to overcome ignorance and lack of sympathy, even persistently virulent antagonism. But your mission is not restricted to your own nation or own party, it is for the betterment of humanity according to your light. But does not humanity include those who do not agree with your aim? Just as you try to help peasants who have other ideas than yours about religion, economics, and social life, not by getting fatally angry with them, but by patiently teaching them and showing

them where the evil lurks in secret, should you not have the same mission to those other people who have other ideals than your own? These you may consider to be mistaken ideals, but they have an historical origin and have become inevitable through a combination of circumstances. You may consider the men who hold them as misguided. But it should all the more be your mission to try to convert them by pity and love, realizing that they are as much a part of humanity as the peasants whom you serve.

'If you dwell too much upon the evil elements in your opponents and assume that they are inherent in human nature meriting eternal damnation, you inspire an attitude of mind which with its content of hatred and revengefulness may some day react against your own ideal and destroy it. You are working in a great cause. Therefore you must be great in your mind, great in your mercy, your understanding and your patience. I feel profound admiration for the greatness of the things you are trying to do, therefore I cannot help expecting for it a motive force of love and an environment of a charitable understanding.

'There must be disagreement where minds are allowed to be free. It would not only be an uninteresting but a sterile world of mechanical regularity if all of our opinions were forcibly made alike. If you have a mission which includes all humanity, you must, for the sake of that living humanity, acknowledge the existence of differences of opinion. Opinions are constantly changed and rechanged only through the free circulation of intellectual forces and moral persuasion. Violence begets violence and blind stupidity. Freedom of mind is needed for the reception of truth; terror hopelessly kills it. The brute cannot subdue the brute. It is only the man who can do it.

'Before leaving your country let me once again assure you that I am struck with admiration by all that you are doing to free those who once were in slavery, to raise up those who were lowly and oppressed, endeavouring to bring help to those who are utterly helpless all through the world, reminding them that the source of their salvation lies in a proper education and their power to combine their human resources. Therefore, for the sake of humanity I hope that you may never create a vicious force of violence which will go on weaving an interminable chain of violence and cruelty. Already you have inherited much of this legacy from the Tsarist regime. It is the worst legacy you possibly could have. You have tried to destroy many of the other evils of that regime. Why not try to destroy this one also? I have learnt much from you, how skilfully you evolve usefulness out of the helpfulness of the weak and ignorant. Your ideal is great and so I ask you for perfection in serving it, and a broad field of freedom for laying its permanent foundation.'

INTERVIEW WITH THE 'JEWISH STANDARD': ON THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

'I RESPECT THE Zionist ideal and admire the selflessness of those who work for it.' Tagore replied when I asked whether he is a pro-Zionist. 'I have followed as closely as I can the steady and continuous progress of the transformation of your ideal into reality. You have made extraordinary headway. But now your political orientation is leading you into a blind alley, a path without issue. Even if England wanted to bring about an Arab-Jewish partnership she could not do so. Arab-Jewish harmony must be achieved in Palestine.'

'How can this harmony be achieved?' the interviewer asked.

'I am not a statesman, nor do I pretend to know the answer to your query,' wearily countered the poet. 'I do know the Arabs, and I believe that I know the Jews. And that is why I feel that political and economic co-operation between them can be achieved. The Jews are an old people. They have withstood persecution, torture, and have refused to lose their identity. Their strength lies in their culture and religion. Yours is a spiritual heritage that grows stronger with age, that cannot be assimilated or absorbed. The Arabs also are an endurable people. Their religion and culture come from the same mould as those of the Jews. Spiritually the Arabs have borrowed much from the Jews. Viewed fundamentally, you and they are one family—yes, one great family. Family quarrels are always virulent'—the philosopher smiled—'but they are adjustable. You have learned to live among people much further from you than the Arabs, people foreign to you in every respect. Even in America, the land of machine culture, you have managed to be both Jews and Americans. Can you not manage to be Jews and Palestinians at the same time?'

An almost supernatural calm came over Tagore's face as he leaned back and listened to the echo which his own words had awakened. Hesitantly I disturbed his peaceful repose: 'But Zionism, Dr Tagore, is trying to find an escape from this dual life of the Jew. It is intended for those who cannot or do not want to assimilate with other nations. If Jews have to differentiate between Jewish nationalism and Palestinism, as you suggest, then Palestine will be merely another America, France or Germany as far as the Jews are concerned.'

In the rhythmic voice that gives a poetic flavor even to his conversation Tagore answered: 'I understand Zionism in the same sense as my great friend Einstein. I regard Jewish nationalism as an effort to preserve and enrich Jewish culture and tradition. In today's world this program requires a national home. It also implies appropriate physical surroundings as well as favourable political and economic conditions. I realize this. Palestine, however, can provide these only if the Jews will include the Arabs in their political and economic program. Your spiritual and cultural programs do not need to sacrifice anything to obtain this political co-operation. I visualize a Palestine Commonwealth in

which the Arabs will live their own religious life and the Jews will revive their resplendent culture, but both will be united as one political and economic entity.

'I see that there is skepticism in your eyes and you think these the ramblings of a naive poet. You wonder how it can be done. I do not doubt the abilities and special gifts of the Jewish people. If you will set your hearts upon convincing the Arabs that their political and economic interests are identical with yours, if you will show them that by your work in Palestine you are building for Arabs and Jews alike, without regard for your cultural differences, the Arabs will in time become your most loyal allies.'

The interviewer humbly submitted that this was what the Zionists had been doing in the past. And yet, in August of last year. . . .

[Arab attacks on Jews in Palestine, following disputes over Jewish use of the Wailing Wall, Jerusalem.]

Rabindranath Tagore did not let me conclude the sentence. A shadow flitted over his beautiful countenance: 'Don't speak about those ugly incidents now. It is because of what happened that I speak as I do. Until recently Arab nationalism was primarily spiritual, though different in aspect from the Jewish. For centuries the Arabs have neglected their land, because spiritually they were above political nationalism. Western civilization calls this state primitive and uncivilized. In any case, the Arabs are newcomers to the Western game of political nationalism and their minds can easily be confused—as they have been confused. They got the idea that their spiritual or religious life was endangered by the Jewish homeland. The intensive integration of the Jewish people into Palestine was misinterpreted by them. Demagogic leadership helped this along. Zionism, which well-trained Western diplomatic minds sometimes find hard to understand, was altogether new and strange to the Arab primitiveness. I am trying to explain that the Arabs' psychological adjustment to a Jewish homeland must necessarily be a gradual process.

'Jews must have patience and resourcefulness in dealing with the Arab. You who are a blending of Western and Eastern civilization must be indulgent teachers. Despite political obstacles you must keep your spiritual heritage intact. Notwithstanding sacrifices you must plod along on the road to an understanding with your co-nationalists of Palestine.

'Einstein's religion—with which I agree fundamentally though we differ in some minor aspects—is opposed to petty chauvinism, to rigid political nationalism. His cosmic faith cannot be disturbed by White Papers or other instruments of European diplomacy. It is such faith which will lead you to that broad nationalism which you can establish in Palestine as an example to the whole of humanity. Don't become enmeshed in paragraphs and clauses. The Jews of all nations know that political protection means nothing. Treaties have never saved you from persecution. They never will.

'Come to your co-Palestinians in a free spirit and tell them: 'You and we are both old races. We are both stubborn races. You cannot subdue us, and we will not try to change you. But we can both be ourselves, retain our identity and

still be united in the political aims of Palestine, the Commonwealth of Jews and Arabs.' I know that you will not be understood at your first approach. Forget the Western conception of prestige and pride and keep on working with this end in view: A Palestine Commonwealth in which Arabs and Jews will live their own distinct cultural and spiritual lives. Then you will, you must succeed.'

Tagore leaned back exhausted. Speaking almost to himself, he added, in a low whisper: 'The Palestine problem cannot be solved in London by any negotiations between the British Government and the Zionist leaders. The success of Zionism depends entirely upon Arab-Jewish co-operation. This can be obtained in Palestine only by means of a direct understanding between the Arabs and the Jews. If the Zionist leadership will insist on separating Jewish political and economic interests in Palestine from those of the Arabs ugly eruptions will occur in the Holy Land.'

Closing his eyes, Rabindranath Tagore murmured softly: 'What we poets have dreamt the Jews can create in Palestine if they free themselves of the Western concept of nationalism.'

1930

INTERVIEWS IN PERSIA

1 DISCUSSION WITH THE EDITOR OF 'ISPHAHAN'

QUESTION: After welcoming you, sir, to this land which holds you in high honour, may we be permitted to ask whether you have so far enjoyed your tour in this country?

POET: Your country is beautiful and your hospitality is overwhelming. I have had a most enjoyable time in all the places I have visited.

QUESTION: Has the beauty and as you kindly put it, the hospitable nature of our people, had any effect yet on your thoughts and writings?

POET: I am gathering inspiration; I am sure when I leave Persia I shall carry home within my heart experiences which will be of permanent value to me. As yet I have seen only a few places in your country—Bushire is a port town situated practically in a desert, yet with great care you have preserved some gardens within it. Shiraz is lovely with birds, blossoms, trees and its springtime climate which I enjoyed very much. In Khalil-Abad garden I used to watch the purple outline of the hills in the background; the shady trees gave me rest.

QUESTION: We know you visited the tombs of Saadi and Hafez.

POET: Those experiences have gone deep into my heart. You know I had my first introduction to Hafez through my father who used to recite his verses to me. They seemed to me like a greeting from a far away poet who was yet near to me.

25 April 1932

II DISCUSSIONS WITH EDUCATIONISTS AT TEHERAN

POET: I am glad to meet you here today and have this opportunity of discussing with you about some fundamental principles of education which we owe it to the modern generation to establish in our educational institutions. To me the most important issue seems to be the task of widening the mental horizon of the students, of imparting to their studies the background of internationalism which will enable them to realize the true character of our interlinked humanity and the deeper unities of our civilizations in the West and the East.

EDUCATOR 1: I express on behalf of my colleagues and myself our profound thankfulness to you for reviving in your educational colony the spirit of internationalism which is the spirit of Asia.

This spirit as you know, sir, is not foreign to our Persian civilization. In the olden days Shapur's University was a refuge for students of Rome who met with no racial bias from our people when they flocked round our teachers for knowledge. After the invasion of the Arabs, in the Nizamic schools we had Jewish, Arab and Assyrian students. Our educational traditions have consistently maintained this supernational attitude in all matters relating to quest of truth. It is because of this tradition which we yet carry in our blood that we can accept your great message with an open heart.

POET: I rejoice to hear that you share with me a deep faith in cultural federation between different peoples and races. In India we have offered hospitality to various indigenous and foreign cultures and attempted to evolve our own civilization by assimilating influences from far and wide. It is only now that in our artificial universities we have gone in wholly for parrot-like repetition, in imitation that is uncritical, in memorising lessons without using our own initiative of mind and courage of judgment. It produces eternal schoolboys who gather informations that never ripen into true knowledge and wisdom.

My dream is to offer to our students a continental background of mind, a background in which have been co-ordinated the experiences of ages, the intellectual and spiritual experiments made in Asia for long generations.

Europe has evolved a continental culture which is like a common coffer to which the different peoples of Europe contribute their best gifts. Owing to this collaboration Europe has become great. She has successfully exploited the rich potentialities of her peoples and come to the fore-front in the march of life. Asia too must reorganize her continental life and vitalize her scattered cultures by recognizing their affinities and expressing them in literature, arts, science and civic life. Barriers of national segregation must be broken through, superstitions of religions and social incompatibility must be relentlessly fought against. In a daring quest of all that lies deepest in our common humanity Asia must unite and hold out her hands to the West in friendly co-operation.

EDUCATOR 2: Sir, we are sure that your hopes will be justified because a whole civilization expresses its deepest needs, its greatest fulfilment through its men of genius. A prophet is the product of circumstance, appearing at a critical period of a country's history. Now all the great nations of Asia are thinking of their past glories, they are waking up to their responsibility, to their national inheritance. They are seeking a great message which will ignite their dormant consciousness and bring about an illumination of their fullest personality. You appear, sir, as a prophet and spokesman of Asia's great dreams, through you we are beginning to realize the nature of the work which we educators have before us. Though we get your message through the unsatisfying medium of translation, your noble physiognomy and the music of your speech bring it very near to our soul.

POET: We must no longer be satisfied with isolated domestic lamps, we must have a festival of lights which will express the effulgence of our humanity in Asia and justify us before the modern age. Otherwise we can never hope to be recognized by the world at large, we shall remain obscure, and the bondage of obscurity is the worst form of slavery that can shackle a nation. We must gain freedom, freedom which is a gift of self-expression, not an opportunity for self-indulgence in material comforts. During our great past our free peoples sent their torch-bearers to different countries to carry the radiant message of love, of great thoughts and deeds, to acquaint their neighbouring peoples with the highest realizations of their seers and sages. Asia in those days had the freedom of soul to bestow and to accept all that she considered great and enduring; it is that highest form of freedom which we must today win for our coming generations by opening up through an education of complete life the richest potentialities of their character. This education of a complete life involves training to recognize the kinship of our common humanity through a correct reading of history, of science, of the arts, in the light of man's spiritual truth.

Utilitarian education has its value but it is deprived of all significance if in its fragmentary pursuit of narrow immediate ends it fails to arouse in the mind of students the impulse of larger purposes, of aspirations which comprehend the fulness of our personality. In the East we must never forget to link up our educational institutions with the fundamental values of our undivided spiritual life, because that has been the greatest mission of our ancient universities, which, as you have said, in spite of political vicissitudes, never allowed their vision of humanity to be darkened by racial considerations. Asia owes it to humanity to restore her spirit of generous co-operation in culture and heal the suffering peoples of the modern age now divided by cruel politics and materialistic greed which vitiate even the citadels of education.

In order to have this intermingling of minds in Asia we must rid our minds that are dark and against reason, of all the aberrations of local

history that repel others and with a spirit of intellectual detachment seek out the treasures that have universal value.

EDUCATOR 1: Material progress is essential but it must know its limits. You have made wonderfully clear to us today our task as educators to inspire our students with a correct sense of values which may be described as the one great purpose of education. Every student of history knows how nations have perished either from dire paucity of material needs or from a surfeit of them. The East and the West, roughly speaking, present before us today a spectacle of these two extreme conditions. Europe by concentrating on material achievement has exploited nature and man at the expense of her soul. She has evolved a unity of civilization because of the urge of a common purpose which has permeated her continental life. But that is not enough—the results are too evident to need explanation. Asia still retains the vision of a synthetic cultural life where the good is the good of our whole nature, of all the peoples;—but as you have made evident to us now, failing to establish her ideals on the basis of a united, a continental civilization, she has become ineffective.

Sir, you have raised the banner of Asia's self-expression, your ideas of education are a new revelation to the modern age. We are proud that through you our continent offers to all humanity the promise of a new path which will lead us out of the debris of the present, out of all the delusions and oppressions which insult our human nature and bring us into mutual conflict. You can be assured that we shall never forget your message, that our renascent nation will strive its utmost to put your ideas into effective operation.

POET: I thank you for your sympathy and your faith which strengthen my hopes for the future. Our institution in Bengal depends on your co-operation for its success. We must keep in touch with each other and be guided by the experiences we both gain in our efforts to train the minds of the young towards a fellowship of culture which will bring humanity together in love and understanding.

3 May 1932

III DISCUSSIONS WITH DASHTY, A MEMBER OF THE IRANIAN ASSEMBLY

POET: My time in Persia is coming to an end. I have not been here for long, yet I do not feel like a stranger. It is surprising that though I do not know your language somehow I have come very close to you and can easily communicate with you and feel the warmth of your friendship. There is not much difference between your people and ours, the general outlook on life and temperament seems to be very much akin.

DASHTY: Languages are after all secondary; of primary importance is our psychological make-up which manifests itself directly through the medium of gestures and expressions.

You told me in Bushire that you have come to us in Persia to discover

the old India. Quite true, our real spirit is old Indian; it comes from a past when we shared a common culture. Even now an inner affinity persists, and it is this that makes you feel at home with us.

POET: Yes, the path was open for me before I was born. As a matter of fact, in our home in Bengal the spirit of Iran was a living influence when I was a child. My revered father and my elder brothers were deeply attached to Persian mystical literature and art.

Going further back one discovers that at one time the Bengali language freely borrowed words from your vocabulary which we use now without knowing their origin. When you find this, you must know that something of your culture flows through our daily life; for words are merely symbols of thoughts and attitudes which they represent. Even before the Mohamedan rule in India there was active cultural interchange between India and Iran; in our classical art and literature direct traces of this are to be discovered.

I do not indeed find your life and habits at all unfamiliar, it is very easy for me to adjust myself to your ways and to realize your spirit.

DASHTY: I hope we have not tired you too much. We all wanted to see you and get the inspiration of your personality. It has not been possible for us to spare you as much as we should have done.

POET: You know, that is what I wanted. I had been longing to meet different groups of your people, to know individuals irrespective of their vocation, their station in life. I confess that sometimes the strain of engagements has told on my health but I have never minded this. It has been a great inspiration for me to meet your people to converse with them on present-day affairs in Persia which are of vital interest to us.

A GENTLEMAN: Have you already started a centre of Persian culture in your university in Bengal?

POET: Yes, because I have always felt that it is necessary for us both to know each other, not only because of our common ancestry but because there is something in your literature and art which deeply appeals to us. The Persian temperament is poetic,you love music and merry conversation, you share our love for nature's beauty.

If you were rigidly pious 'Mullahs' corresponding to our Hindu priests, we could not have dared to invite you. Unfortunately two of our biggest communities in India have yet too many representatives of this type of bigotry and that is why we cannot come together. I claim the collaboration of your scholars and artists whose influence will unite us culturally and modify our differences which are not really fundamental.

DASHTY: How do you like Persian music?

POET: Very much indeed. Some of your recent innovations I do not fully understand. It seems to me that they have not yet been fully assimilated by the native genius of your music. They are too reminiscent of Europe; in any case, they do not move me so much as your classical music.

DASHTY: We are of the same opinion. We feel that the introduction of harmony

is too recent to have successfully enriched our music; but may be gradually we shall evolve a music which will be all the more beautiful because of these innovations.

POET: It must be so. You have all along had a wonderful gift of assimilating influences from outside and coming out more fully with the expression of your own unique culture. In music too you are sure to gain by European influence. I have always felt sad that European music has not had any direct influence on our own, that great European composers such as Beethoven have, unlike great European poets or philosophers, wielded little or no influence on Eastern cultural movements. For European music is unquestionably great and without doubt our own music will be all the richer if it can absorb, into its living texture, creative influences form European music.

DASHTY: I am one of those who believe that Persia should assimilate 100 per cent of American culture. I am not afraid of foreign influence; indeed, I believe, that nothing can radically change our temperament, so that we may safely go in for Americanization. We shall then be American in our methods but thoroughly Persian in our culture. I believe you try to follow the same principle in Santiniketan.

POET: The time has come when we must think deeply about human civilization. You must have read Spengler's book on European civilization. It raises searching questions about the destiny of the modern Western civilization and gives us dangerous parallelism from history.

When you speak of hundred per cent Americanization you must remember that America herself is faced today with an imminent crisis and has yet to achieve a stability which will prove the soundness of her social and political machinery.

I was talking today to a German scientist—Dr Stratil-Sauer of Leipzig—who has come here all the way from Berlin by motor car for geological exploration, and he was telling me the same thing about Europe. The whole Western civilization is undergoing a severe trial. The reckless mechanization of life which has gone on in the West is already having a drastic reaction.

We in the East must ponder seriously before we go in for hasty imitation of Western life in its totality. There is a profound maladjustment somewhere at the very basis of European life. Everywhere there is a material well-being but happiness has vanished. And how could it be otherwise? Pierce through the veneer of modernity and you find almost primitive barbarism staring at you. What is high-pressure modern life for the multitude but a ceaseless preoccupation with physical needs—a hot pursuit of dress, expensive cars, elaborate food and housing, that is to say, of materials which satisfy the elementary needs of our animal existence? Such a life has no time for self-realization, for human fellowship, for all that make man's existence significant and precious. Certainly, this is the modern form of barbarism which exhausts all its resources merely to

climb up the steep summit of living surrounded by emptiness.

DASHTY: Our soul accepts what it may; we cannot determine consciously how much to receive or reject exactly. The whole process of assimilation is a subconscious one so that there is perhaps no fear of only outside influence totally submerging or exterminating the basic character of our civilization. If we try to profit by American modes of life and hold them before our people we shall probably adopt only a few of them and that will be all to our benefit. Greek ideals, for example, have left their legacy in the great architecture and sculpture of India; but at the beginning of Greek influence we would probably have feared that India was doing harm to its traditions by accepting Greek motifs and technique to experiment upon. In Persia similarly we have had periods of extraneous influence but this has only vitalised our Persian genius. We have quickly shaken off the imitative phase and retained something from it which have helped us.

POET: Why then do you emphasize upon American modes of life and how can you isolate and specify a particular country when you want the healthy contact of science, which is neither American nor Western but universal in its truth? I am not condemning America in particular but only pointing out that when you say you want to imitate a particular country or people you can only copy things and external facts, you cannot assimilate truths which lie at the foundation of our human character. If any nation or a people have been successful in giving shape to ideals which are of perennial value, what we have to learn from them is their capacity to absorb and establish these ideals; we must not merely copy the results that others have produced. That is my point—I am not against absorbing truths which are of universal value; as a matter of fact, it is our human birthright to claim such truths as our own. But I am against borrowing ready-made models or emphasizing upon the need of imitating isolated external facts which are particular to a particular race or a nation. Let our emphasis be on Truth, not on particular facts which have had their special evolution under inevitable local circumstances.

DASHTY: I quite agree. I mentioned America as an example.

POET: The German scientist told me that Europe is sick of her mechanised high-speed life which adds materials but fails to satisfy the soul. As a result of this, there are many of them who seek out remote spots where they can forget the rush and fever of a purposeless existence; they go to the South Sea Islands, Madagascar, Middle Africa and so on where they can wash themselves clean of Western ways of living. He told me of a great Leipzig professor who gave up his scientific work and all that he held dear in his life to search for inner peace which he found in a Tibetan monastery. It may be a reaction but it indicates very grave problems which the modern age can no longer ignore. In Darmstadt, after the War, German students with pale emaciated faces used to flock round me and ask: 'Sir, we have lost faith in our teachers, they have misled us. What shall we do with our

lives?' They expected an Eastern poet to give them something which would satisfy their spiritual hunger, some philosophy of life which the Western world needed for its salvation.

DASHTY: Yes, we must work to bring the Western Spirit of Science and the Eastern Philosophy of Life together. Materially we must be secure, spiritually we must develop our human wealth of character.

POET: That is what I say. We must get out of the tangle of doctrines and the infatuation of material results in order to achieve a balanced harmony of life which, as you indicate, takes cognizance of our complete human personality comprehending the physical as well as the spiritual aspects of our nature. This harmony, however, can never be established unless we have sufficient detachment of mind to judge for ourselves, to minister to the essential and reject all that is ephemeral and delusive in building the foundation of our national life. It would be fatal if we surrender our critical faculty to a mood of indiscriminate emulation. We in the East, however poor we may now be materially, must reserve the right of judging what we consider to be beneficial or not for humanity, of selecting for ourselves a path which suits the evolution of our civilization. By exercising this right of judgment we shall not only be serving our own country but do our inescapable duty to the whole world of humanity of which we form a part.

DASHTY: We thank you, Sir, for your words of wisdom which, we assure you, we shall treasure in the depths of our life.

1932

ON FILM

'[TAGORE] DEPLORED the prevalence of films representing sex-relationships, gushing sentimentality, night clubs, crime or ludicrous adventures, which he said, were having a most mischievous effect upon the Indian population. It was seldom realized that the average Indian possessed a deep artistic consciousness, and they would always respond to any film of an elevating character or spiritual background.

'The films at present shown could only be regarded in most cases as a libel upon Western civilization. Many of the films which were presumed to represent Indian Orientals constantly misrepresented the life and manners of the East.

'He warmly commended "The Light of Asia" film which in its beauty and dignity counteracted such misrepresentations, and he hoped the work initiated by the Indian players in such a film would be followed up by other films representing Oriental ideals in their proper aspects. The value from the moral educative standpoint of such a film was incalculable. He had great faith in the

people, and he believed that a levelling up of the tone of the films generally shown was not only very desirable, but would be welcomed by the majority of film audiences.

'Rabindranath Tagore welcomed the formation of the British Empire Film Institute and was so impressed with the value of its work that he consented to join its Grand Council. Every movement, he said, that aimed at encouraging the emergence of higher standards of art in this industry deserved every support.'

1926

Appendix A

TO SHAKESPEARE

WHEN BY THE far away sea your fiery disc appeared from behind the unseen, O poet, O Sun. England's horizon felt you near her breast, and took you to be her own.

She kissed your forehead, caught you in the arms of her forest branches, hid you behind her mist mantle and watched you in the green sward where fairies love to play among meadow flowers.

A few early birds sang your hymn of praise, while the rest of the woodland choir were asleep.

Then at the silent beckoning of the Eternal you rose higher and higher till you reached the mid-sky, making all quarters of heaven your own.

Therefore, at this moment, after the end of centuries, the palm groves by the Indian sea raise their tremulous branches to the sky murmuring your praise.

1915

'A WEARY PILGRIM . . .'

A WEARY PILGRIM, I travel across the haunts
of iron-limbed monsters,
prolific of progeny,
shricking and stinking,
befouling heaven and earth,

devouring life
to change it into piles of deadly peril.

The path is intricate,
unfriendly the night,
the barred gates guarded by snarling suspicion
that growls at the shadows of strangers seeking home.

Send thy welcome signal,
O Rising Sun,
Open the golden gate at the ancient shrine of the East
Where dwells the spirit of man,
great as the grass that blesses the lowly dust,
and meek as the mountain under stars.

1929

APPEAL FOR RELIEF

THE FAMISHED, the homeless
raise their hands towards heaven
and utter the name of God
Their call will never be in vain
in the land where God's response
comes through the heart of man
in heroic service and love.

1931

THE CLEANSER

WHY DO THEY shun your touch, my friend,
and call you unclean
Whom cleanliness follows at every step,
making the earth and air sweet for our dwelling,
and ever luring us back from return to the wild?
You help us, like a mother her child, into freshness,
and uphold the truth, that disgust is never for man.
The holy stream of your ministry carries pollutions away
and ever remains pure.
Once Lord Shiva had saved the world from a deluge of poison by taking
it himself,
And you save it everyday from filth with the same divine sufferance.
Come friend, come my hero, give us courage
to serve man, even while bearing the brand of infamy from him.

1933

'FREEDOM FROM FEAR'

FREEDOM FROM fear is the freedom I claim
for you my mother land.
Fear, the phantom demon,
Shaped by your own distorted dreams,

Freedom from the burden of ages,
bending your head, breaking your back,
binding your eyes to the beckoning call of future.

27 September 1933

DESHABANDHU CHITTARANJAN DAS

THY MOTHERLAND spreads the veil
from her breast on this dust
There thy body left its last touch.
Thy country's invocation is chanted
in these silent studies
for thy bodiless presence to take its seat
here on the altar of deathless love

16 June 1935

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

DIVERSE COURSES of worship from varied springs
of fulfilment have mingled in your meditation.

The manifold revealation of the joy of the
Infinite has given form to a shrine of unity in your life

Where from afar and near arrive salutations to which I join mine own.

1935

'SPEAK TO ME, MY FRIEND'

SPEAK TO ME, my friend, of him,
and say that he has whispered
to thee in the central hush of the storm
and in the heart of the peace
where life puts on its armour.

Say that thy utmost need is of him
and that he ever seeketh thy straying heart
through tangle of paths.

TWO POEMS WRITTEN IN IRAN

I

I CARRY IN my heart a golden lamp of remembrance of an illumination that is past.
I keep it bright against the tarnishing touch of time.
Thine is a fire of a new magnanimous life.
Allow it, my brother, to kiss my lamp with its flame.

II

IRAN, ALL the roses in thy garden
and all their lover birds
have acclaimed the birthday
of the poet of a far-away shore
and mingled their voices in a pair of rejoicing.

Iran, thy brave sons have brought
their priceless gifts of friendship
on this birthday of the poet of a far-away shore,
for they have known him in their hearts as their own.
Iran, crowned with a new glory
by the honour from thy hand
this birthday of the poet of a far-away shore
finds its fulfilment.
And in return I bind this wreath of my verse
on thy forehead, and I cry: Victory to Iran!

1932

MY VINA BREAKS OUT

MY VINA BREAKS out in strange disquiet
measure,
My heart to-day is tremulous with the heart-throbs
of the world.

Who is the restless youth that comes, his mantle
fluttering in the breeze?
The woodland resounds with the murmur of joy
at the dance-lyric of the light,
The anklet-bells of the dancer quiver in the
sky with an unheard tinkle,
To whose cadence the forest-leaves clap their hands?
The hope for the touch of a nearing foot-step
spreads a whisper in the grass.
And the wind breaks its fetters, distraught
with the perfume of the unknown.

YOU HAVE COME TO ME

You have come to me hidden in the darkness
of night, My Friend!
You draw me to your bosom with your firm
strong hands, My Joy!
You ride upon the chariot, drawn by my sorrow,
My Friend!
Is it a trouble, is it a loss?
It is You, My Joy!
O the Enemy, defeat me in your fight,
My Friend!
O the Awful, make an end to all the fears,
My Joy!
O Thunder, rend my heart and enter into my being,
My Friend!
O Death, Show me the path to immortal freedom,
My Joy!

Appendix B

THE NOBEL PRIZE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

I AM GLAD that I have been able to come at last to your country and that I may use this opportunity for expressing my gratitude to you for the honour you have done to me by acknowledging my work and rewarding me by giving me the Nobel Prize.

I remember the afternoon when I received the cablegram from my publisher in England that the prize had been awarded to me. I was staying then at the school Shantiniketan, about which I suppose you know. At that moment we were taking a party over to a forest near by the school, and when I was passing by the telegram office and the post office, a man came running to us and held up the telegraphic message. I had also an English visitor with me in the same carriage. I did not think that the message was of any importance, and I just put it into my pocket, thinking that I would read it, when I reached my destination. But my visitor supposed he knew the contents, and he urged me to read it, saying that it contained an important message. And I opened and read the message, which I could hardly believe. I first thought that possibly the telegraphic language was not quite correct and that I might misread the meaning of it, but at last I felt certain about it. And you can well understand how rejoicing it was for my boys at the school and for the teachers. What touched me more deeply than anything else was that these boys who loved me and for whom I had the deepest love felt proud of the honour that had been awarded to him for whom they had feeling of reverence, and I realized that my countrymen would share with me the honour which had been awarded to myself.

The rest of the afternoon passed away in this manner, and when the night came I sat upon the terrace alone, and I asked myself the question what the reason could be of my poems being accepted and honoured by the West—in spite of my belonging to a different race, parted and separated by seas and mountains from the children of the West. And I can assure you that it was not with a feeling of exaltation but with a searching of the heart that I questioned myself, and I felt humble at that moment.

I remember how my life's work developed from the time when I was very young. When I was about 25 years I used to live in utmost seclusion in the solitude of an obscure Bengal village by the river Ganges in a boat-house. The wild ducks which came during the time of autumn from the Himalayan lakes were my only living companions, and in that solitude I seem to have drunk in the open space like wine overflowing with sunshine, and the murmur of the river used to speak to me and tell me the secrets of nature. And I passed my days in the solitude dreaming and giving shape to my dream in poems and studies and sending out my thoughts to the Calcutta public through the magazines and other papers. You can well understand that it was a life quite different from the life of the West. I do not know if any of your Western poets

or writers do pass the greatest part of their young days in such absolute seclusion. I am almost certain that it cannot be possible and that seclusion itself has no place in the Western world.

And my life went on like this. I was an obscure individual—to most of my countrymen in those days. I mean that my name was hardly known outside my own province, but I was quite content with that obscurity, which protected me from the curiosity of the crowds.

And then came a time when my heart felt a longing to come out of that solitude and to do some work for my human fellow-beings, and not merely give shapes to my dreams and meditate deeply on the problems of life, but try to give expression to my ideas through some definite work, some definitive service for my fellow-beings.

And the one thing, the one work which came to my mind was to teach children. It was not because I was specially fitted for this work of teaching, for I have not had myself the full benefit of a regular education. For some time I hesitated to take upon myself this task, but I felt that as I had a deep love for nature I had naturally love for children also. My object in starting this institution was to give the children of men full freedom of joy, of life and of communion with nature. I myself had suffered when I was young through the impediments which were inflicted upon most boys while they attended school and I have had to go through the machine of education which crushes the joy and freedom of life for which children have such insatiable thirst. And my object was to give freedom and joy to children of men.

And so I had a few boys around me, and I taught them, and I tried to make them happy. I was their playmate. I was their companion. I shared their life, and I felt that I was the biggest child of the party. And we all grew up together in this atmosphere of freedom.

The vigour and the joy of the children, their chats and songs filled the air with a spirit of delight, which I drank every day I was there. And in the evening during the sun-set hour I often used to sit alone watching the trees of the shadowing avenue, and in the silence of the afternoon I could hear distinctly the voices of the children coming up in the air, and it seemed to me that these shouts and songs and glad voices were like those trees, which come out from the heart of the earth like fountains of life towards the bosom of the infinite sky. And it symbolized, it brought before my mind the whole cry of human life all expressions of joy and aspirations of men rising from the heart of Humanity up to this sky. I could see that, and I knew that we also, the grown-up children, send up our cries of aspiration to the Infinite. I felt it in my heart of hearts.

In this atmosphere and in this environment I used to write my poems Gitanjali, and I sang them to myself in the midnight under the glorious stars of the Indian sky. And in the early morning and in the afternoon glow of sun-set I used to write these songs till a day came when I felt impelled to come out once again and meet the heart of the large world.

I could see that my coming out from the seclusion of my life among these joyful children and doing my service to my fellow creatures was only a prelude

to my pilgrimage to a larger world. And I felt a great desire to come out and come into touch with the Humanity of the West, for I was conscious that the present age belongs to the Western man with his superabundance of energy.

He has got the power of the whole world, and his life is overflowing all boundaries and is sending out its message to the great future. And I felt that I must before I die come to the West and meet the man of the secret shrine where the Divine presence has his dwelling, his temple. And I thought that the Divine man with all his powers and aspirations of life is dwelling in the West.

And so I came out. After my Gitanjali poems had been written in Bengali I translated those poems into English, without having any desire to have them published, being diffident of my mastery of that language, but I had—the manuscript with me when I came out to the West. And you know that the British public, when these poems were put before them, and those who had the opportunity of reading them in manuscript before, approved of them. I was accepted, and the heart of the West opened without delay.

And it was a miracle to me who had lived for fifty years far away from activity, far away from the West, that I should be almost in a moment accepted by the West as one of its own poets. It was surprising to me, but I felt that possibly this had its deeper significance and that those years which I had spent in seclusion, separated from the life and the spirit of the West, had brought with them a deeper feeling of rest, serenity and feeling of the eternal, and that these were exactly the sentiments that were needed by the Western people with their overactive life, who still in their heart of hearts have a thirst for the peace, for the infinite peace. My fitness was that training which my muse had from my young days in the absolute solitude of the beaches of the Ganges. The peace of those years had been stored in my nature so that I could bring it out and hold it up to the man of the West, and what I offered to him was accepted gratefully.

I know that I must not accept that praise as my individual share. It is the East in me which gave to the West. For is not the East the mother of spiritual Humanity and does not the West, do not the children of the West amidst their games and plays when they get hurt, when they get famished and hungry, turn their face to that serene mother, the East? Do they not expect their food to come from her, and their rest for the night when they are tired? And are they to be disappointed.

Fortunately for me I came in that very moment when the West had turned her face again to the East and was seeking for some nourishment. Because I represented the East I got my reward from my Eastern friends.

And I can assure you that the prize which you have awarded to me was not wasted upon myself. I as an individual had no right to accept it, and therefore I have made use of it for others. I have dedicated it to our Eastern children and students. But then it is like a seed which is put into the earth and comes up again to those who have sown it, and for their benefit it is producing fruits. I have used this money which I got from you for establishing and maintaining the university which I started lately, and it seemed to me, that this university

should be a place where Western students might come and meet their Eastern brethren and when they might work together in the pursuit of truth and try to find the treasures that have lain hidden in the East for centuries and work out the spiritual resources of the East, which are necessary for all Humanity.

I can remind you of a day when India had her great university in the glorious days of her civilization. When a light is lighted it can not be held within a short range. It is for the whole world. And India had her civilization with all its splendours and wisdom and wealth. It could not use it for its own children only. It had to open its gates in hospitality to all races of men. Chinese and Japanese and Persians and all different races of men, came, and they had their opportunity of gaining what was best in India, her best offering of all times and to all Humanity. And she offered it generously. You know the traditions of our country are never to accept any material fees from the students in return to the teaching, because we consider in India that he who has the knowledge has the responsibility to impart it to the students. It is not merely for the students to come and ask it from the master, but it is the master who must fulfil his mission of life by offering the best gift which he has to all who may need it. And thus it was that need of self-expression, of giving what had been stored in India and offering the best thing that she has in herself that made it possible and was the cause and the origin of these universities that were started in the different provinces of India.

And I feel that what we suffer from in the present day is no other calamity but this calamity of obscurity, of seclusion, that we have missed our opportunity of offering hospitality to Humanity and asking the world to share the best things we have got. We lost our confidence in our own civilization for over a century, when we came into contact with the Western races with their material superiority over the Eastern Humanity and Eastern culture, and in the educational establishments no provision was made for our own culture. And for over a century our students have been brought up in utter ignorance of the worth of their own civilization of the past. Thus we did not only lose touch of the great which lay hidden in our own inheritance, but also the great honour of being able to contribute to the civilization of Humanity, to have opportunity of giving what we have and not merely begging from others, not merely borrowing culture and living like eternal schoolboys.

But the time has come when we must not waste such our opportunities. We must try to do our best to bring out what we have, and not go from century to century, from land to land and display our poverty before others. We know what we have to be proud of, what we have inherited from our ancestors, and such opportunity of giving should not be lost—not only for the sake of our people, but for the sake of Humanity.

That is the reason, and that led me to the determination to establish an international institution where the Western and Eastern students could meet and share the common feast of spiritual food.

And thus I am proud to say that your awarding me the prize has made some contribution to this great object which I had in my mind. This has made

me come out once again to the West, and I have come to ask you, to invite you to the feast which is waiting for you in the far East. I hope that my invitation will not be rejected. I have visited different countries of Europe, and I have accepted from them an enthusiastic welcome. That welcome has its own meaning, that the West has need of the East, as the East has need of the West, and so the time has come when they should meet.

I am glad that I belong to this great time, this great age, and I am glad that I have done some work to give expression to this great age, when the East and the West are coming together. They are proceeding towards each other. They are coming to meet each other. They have got their invitation to meet each other and join hands in building up a new civilization and the great culture of the future.

I feel certain that through my writing some such idea has reached you, even if obscurely through the translation, some idea which belongs both to the East and the West, some idea which proceeding from the East has been able to come to the West and claim its rest here, its dwelling, and to be able to receive its welcome, and has been accepted by the West. And if in my writings I have been fortunate enough to be able to interpret the voice of the need of the time I am deeply thankful to you for giving me this glorious opportunity. The acknowledgment I got from Sweden has brought me and my work before the Western public, though I can assure you that it has also given me some trouble. It has broken through the seclusion which I have been accustomed to. It has brought me out before the great public to which I have never been accustomed. And the adjustment has not been yet made. I shrink in my heart when I stand before the great concourse of Humanity in the West. I have not yet been accustomed to accept the great gift of your praise and your admiration in the manner in which you have given it to me. And I feel ashamed and shy when standing before you—I do so now. But I will only say that I am thankful to God that he has given me this great opportunity, that I have been an instrument to bring together, to unite the hearts of the East and the West. And I must to the end of my life carry on that mission. I must do all that I can. The feeling of resentment between the East and the West must be pacified. I must do something, and with that one object I have started this institution.

I do not think that it is the spirit of India to reject anything, reject any race, reject any culture. The spirit of India has always proclaimed the ideal of unity. This ideal of unity never rejects anything, any race, or any culture. It comprehends all, and it has been the highest aim of our spiritual exertion to be able to penetrate all things with one soul, to comprehend all things as they are, and not to keep out anything in the whole universe—to comprehend all things with sympathy and love. This is the spirit of India. Now, when in the present time of political unrest the children of the same great India cry for rejection of the West I feel hurt. I feel that it is a lesson which they have received from the west. Such is not our mission. India is there to unite all human races.

Because of that reason in India we have not been given the unity of races. Our problem is the race problem which is the problem of all Humanity. We

have Dravidians, we have Mohammedans, we have Hindoos and all different sects and communities of men in India. Therefore, no superficial bond of political unity can appeal to us, can satisfy us, can ever be real to us. We must go deeper down. We must discover the most profound unity, the spiritual unity between the different races. We must go deeper down to the spirit of man and find out the great bond of unity, which is to be found in all human races. And for that we are well equipped. We have inherited the immortal works of our ancestors, those great writers who proclaimed the religion of unity and sympathy, in say: He who sees all beings as himself, who realizes all beings as himself, knows Truth. That has once again to be realized, not only by the children of the East but also by the children of the West. They also have to be reminded of these great immortal truths. Man is not to fight with other human races, other human individuals, but his work is to bring about reconciliation and Peace and to restore the bonds of friendship and love. We are not like fighting beasts. It is the life of self which is predominating in our life, the self which is creating the seclusion, giving rise to sufferings, to jealousy and hatred, to political and commercial competition. All these illusions will vanish, if we go down to the heart of the shrine, to the love and unity of all races.

For that great mission of India I have started this university. I ask you now, when I have this opportunity, I invite you to come to us and join hands with us and not to leave this institution merely to us, but let your own students and learned men come to us and help us to make this university to a common institution for the East and the West may they give the contributions of their lives and may we all together make it living and representative of the undivided Humanity of the world.

For this I have come to you. I ask you this and I claim it of you in the name of the unity of men, and in the name of love, and in the name of God. I ask you to come. I invite you.

26 May 1921, Stockholm

Notes

I ESSAYS

Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore

First published by Macmillan, New York, in 1921 under the title *Thought Relic.* It was also reprinted along with *Stray Birds* in 1924. The next edition in 1929 with a changed title is a much enlarged work. The first edition contained 103 pieces; the second contained 89 more. The first edition was not divided into parts.

This work did not receive much attention either from the Western critics or from the Indian readers mainly because of the nature of the work, which Sujit Mukherjee describes as 'interminate literary genre' resembling more a book of meditation than anything else.[1]

Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay informs that the book originated on Tagore's way to England in May 1920, on the boat.[2] He suggests that these were translations from his Bengali religious discourses, *Śāntiniketan.* Amiya Chakravarty also informs us that the passages are 'Tagore's own translation: ...from his weekly discourses entitled *Śāntiniketan* delivered during 1906–1909. ... Tagore started translating these for use in his *Sādhanā* lectures in the United States... and he added fresh translations while on his way to the West in 1920.'[3] A close look into the English texts, however, reveals that very few passages have been translated from the Bengali, most of them having been written originally in English. A few of them have resemblances with some of the essays of *Śāntiniketan.* There exists, of course, a close relationship of thought and ideas and occasionally of metaphors and images between these passages and the *Śāntiniketan* lectures and *Dharma* as well as the essays included in *Sādhanā* and *Personality.* The following list indicates the passages which are direct translations from the Bengali or have some resemblance to the Bengali essays. Their sources are given within brackets. All the essays mentioned in brackets are from *Śāntiniketan,* unless stated otherwise. The figures within brackets at the end of the English phrases in the left column indicate the serial number of the passages in *Thoughts from Tagore.*

Last night I dreamt (1)	(*abhay,* 3rd para)
In my early years (2)	(*ātmār dṛṣṭi,* 1st para)
Spiritual life is the emancipation (3)	(*ātmār dṛṣṭi,* 4th para)
Today is the special day (4)	(*śāntiniketane sātui pauṣ utsav,* several sentences)
I need have no anxiety (5)	(*icchā,* 1st para)
In our everyday world (6)	('*utsav*', *Dharma,* partly)
Life's highest opportunity (7)	(*abhyās?*)
It is still dark (15)	(*mānuṣ,* 1st para)

[1] Sujit Mukherjee, *Passage to America,* Calcutta, 1963, p. 52.
[2] Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabindra Jibani,* Vol. II, p. 35.
[3] Amiya Chakravarty, *A Tagore Reader,* 1961, p. 256.

Last night when (18)	(*bhāṅgā hāṭ*, few lines)
The horse harnessed (19)	(*tyāg*, 7th para)
Love is not a mere impulse (21)	(*tin*, faint echo)
Coming to the theatre of life (26)	(*bimukhatā*, 3rd para)
The day breaks (29)	(*bimukhatā*, 5th and 6th paras)
An acquaintance of mine (33)	(*mṛtyu o amṛta*, 1st para)
Today on the sin-laden (51)	(*pāper mārjanā* is comparable)
To fledgling birds (54)	(*nīḍer śikṣā*, similarity of the image)
Morning has its bird song (57)	(*saundaryer sakaruṇatā*, 1st para)
This symphony (58)	(inspired by *saundaryer sakaruṇatā*)
A young friend of mine (89)	(*pūrṇa*, 1st para)
When I was a child (90)	(*pūrṇa*, the sentence beginning with *śaiśabe yakhan dhulābāli niye*, etc.)

The Religion of Man (1931)

Dedicated to Dorothy Elmhirst.[4] The book contains the Hibbert Lectures for 1930 delivered at Manchester College, Oxford, in May that year (19, 21 and 26 May). *Manchester Guardian* reported that 'no series of the Hibbert lecture has aroused more public interest than the present one'. These lectures are different from his later book *Mānuṣer Dharma* in Bengali, which also means 'the Religion of Man', the Kamala lectures delivered at the University of Calcutta in 1933, though both are identical in thought and perception. Both works are significant as expositions of religious attitudes totally different from institutionalized religions. *The Religion of Man* is conspicuous by its loving reference to the rural religious traditions as opposed to the canonical religious texts.

The first edition of *The Religion of Man* was published by Allen and Unwin, London, in 1930. It had seven appendices.

1. The Baul Singer of Bengal
2. Note on the Nature of Reality
3. Dadu and the Mystery of Form
4. The Race Problem
5. Brahma Vidya
6. The East and the West
7. An Address in the Chapel of Manchester College.

[4] Dorothy Whitney Straight was the wife of Leonard Elmhirst who helped Tagore in the building up of Sriniketan, an institute of rural reconstruction. Dorothy provided the fund for the entire enterprise. Soon after her marriage with Elmhirst in 1925 they founded Darlington Hall in England. It may be mentioned that Dorothy's daughter from her first marriage, Beatrice Straight, helped Uday Shankar to set up a Cultural Centre at Almora.

Macmillan, New York, published the second edition the following year. It had a prefatory poem originally composed for the opening day celebrations of the Indian College, Montpelier, France.[5] It deleted appendices 5 and 6 of the first edition (they were originally part of *Letters to a Friend*) and the title of the last one was changed to 'Night and Morning'. There were also changes the arrangement of chapters, except for the first four and conclusions which are the same in both editions. The rest are as follows:

Allen and Unwin edition 1930	*Macmillan edition 1931*
5. The Prophet	5. Man's Nature
6. The Vision	6. Spiritual Freedom
7. The Man of My Heart	7. Meeting
8. The Music Maker	8. The Prophet
9. The Artist	9. The Vision
10. Man's Nature	10. The Man of My Heart
11. The Meeting	11. The Music Maker
12. The Teacher	12. The Four Stages of Life
13. Spiritual Freedom	13. The Teacher
14. The Four Stages of Life	14. Artist

A copy of the 1930 edition in which Tagore made substantive corrections, is fortunately preserved in Rabindra Bhavan (ms. no. 433). These corrections involving deletion of passages, restructuring of paragraphs, changes in transliteration, and shifting of lines from one chapter to another were incorporated in the Macmillan edition in 1931 and then in the subsequent reprints by Allen and Unwin. We have reproduced the corrected edition or the second edition. It may be pointed out that several reprints of the work, including the Unwin paperback (1988) edition with an introduction by Andrew Robinson, have excluded the appendices. We have kept them intact, except that the Tagore–Einstein conversation (Appendix 2) has been shifted to Section IV (Conversations and Interviews) of this volume to achieve greater homogeneity.

Man (1937)

Lecture delivered in 1933 at Andhra University under the terms of Sir Alladi Krishnaswami, Waltair. Second impression, 1965. The original form of the lecture was in Bengali (see *Visva-Bharati News*, June 1934, p. 4). 'The poet, in this connection wishes me to acknowledge the help of Mr Amya [sic] Chandra Chakravarty and Mr Humayun Kabir in the English translation of the original Bengali article.'

The first version of the lecture was published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. II, No. 8, February 1934, pp. 79–87).

[5] This poem was sent to Patric Geddis, the founder of the College, on 16 September 1929. It was later translated into Bengali and published in *Bicatrā* (Pauṣ 1337, i.e. 1930). Later it was included in *Bīthikā* under the title 'Bāṇi' (*pakṣe bahiya asīm kāler bārtā*). Also to be found in *Rabīndra Racanābalī*, Vol. 3 (West Bengal Government).

Letters to a Friend (1928)

Enlarged and revised edition of *Letters from Abroad*, published by S. Ganesan, Madras, in 1922. This edition was published by George Allen and Unwin, London, in 1928. It consists of letters written to C.F. Andrews during the years 1913–22.

Charles Freer Andrews (1871–1940), a British Christian missionary, a friend of both Gandhi and Tagore, an active supporter of the Indian national movement, was also a champion of Indian labourers in different countries including Fiji and British Guyana. This book contains a preface as well as two introductory essays by Andrews himself. The book is dedicated to the memory of W.W. Pearson (1881–1923) who came to India in the first decade of the century as a member of the London Missionary Society. He came into Tagore's contact in 1912 and their relationship continued till his death. Tagore dedicated his *Balākā* to Pearson.

This work in its present shape was conceived and produced by Andrews. It also contains an etching of Tagore from the dry point of Muirhead Bone as frontispiece, a facsimile of Tagore's manuscript, and two etchings of Tagore by Mukul Dey.

The letters from Tagore presented here have been divided into several chapters each with introductory notes by Andrews which have made the book not just a collection of letters but a well-knit coherent narrative. Andrews has given brief but adequate information useful to the understanding of the context of the letters and kept his interventions in the narrative to the minimum. Many of the letters are genuine expressions of Tagore's anxiety about modern civilization and particularly about political life in India. Some of the letters are important in the history of the Gandhi–Tagore relationship. The letter dated 10 May 1921, for example, was provoked by Gandhi's description of Rammohun Roy as a pygmy.[6] Andrews, too, wrote an article disputing the Mahatma.[7] In the letter of 18 September 1920 as well as in a few letters written in March the following year, Tagore expressed his reservations about the non-cooperation movement.

It is necessary to point out that the letter dated 21 April 1921 included in this book was actually written to W. Rothenstein, a copy of which was sent to Andrews. Andrews included that letter by mistake. The poem 'My Vina Breaks Out' in Chapter VIII of this book is a translation of the Bengali song 'Mor bīṇā oṭhe kon sure bāji' (*Arūp Ratan*) written in 1919.

Mahatmaji and the Depressed Humanity (1932)

Published by the Visva-Bharati Bookshop, 210 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. This book was dedicated to Prafulla Chandra Ray 'in appreciation of his self-sacrifice for his country and his students'. The title page contains the

[6] For Gandhi's statement see *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XIX, The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1966, pp. 476–78. A revised version was published in *Young India* (27 April 1921). See *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, pp. 42–43.

[7] 'Raja Rammohun Roy and English Education', *The Modern Review*, May 1921.

announcement that the 'proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the Sanskara Samiti, Visva-Bharati for helping in its work of removing untouchability'.

The lectures, essays, telegrams, etc. collected in this book were prompted by Gandhi's resolve to fast unto death protesting against the communal award by Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. Gandhi, then in Yerwada jail, decided to go on fast from 20 September 1932.

We have not included three Bengali essays—'4th Āśvin', 'Mahatāmājir Śeṣvrata' and 'Punā Bhramaṇ' which are part of this work. However, an English translation of the first essay, entitled 'The Twentieth September', is to be found in the book.

It may be mentioned here that Tagore wrote a lot more on Gandhi. Most of his Bengali essays and one poem on Gandhi, have been collected in a book entitled *Mahātmā Gāndhī* (1948). But even more important is his creation of the character Dhananjay in the play *Muktadhārā* (1922), as a tribute to the Mahatma. This character, who first appeared in the play *Prāyaścitta* (1909), has been described by several Tagore critics as an anticipation of Gandhi.

East and West (1935)

Exchange of letters between Gilbert Murray (1866–1957) and Tagore. First published by the International Institute of Intellectual Corporation, 2 Rue Montpensier, Palais-Royal, Paris, in 1935, as one of the titles in *An International Series of Open Letters.*

Murray did not belong to Tagore's intimate circle but he was a great admirer of the poet. His love for the spirit of ancient Greece strengthened his faith in the freedom of man, due to which he participated in various liberal movements of his time and responded warmly to Tagore's poetry and thought. Towards the beginning of August 1934 Murray wrote to Tagore expressing his concern about the post-World War European society, to which Tagore replied with his usual optimism and frankness. These letters were collected and published in early 1935.

II LECTURES AND ADDRESSES

Race Conflict
An address delivered at the Congress of the National Federation of Religious Liberals held at Rochester, New York, USA, in 1912. Published in *The Modern Review*, April 1913.

The Spirit of Japan
Lecture delivered in different places in Japan, during Tagore's first visit to that country in June–August 1915. First published in *The Modern Review*, June 1917. Tagore's lectures, the most important of which was this one, made him quite

unpopular in Japan. The lecture is identical with his talks in *Nationalism* both in tone and substance.

The Meeting of the East and the West
Reprinted from the *Manchester Guardian* in *The Modern Review*, June 1918. Based on the Bengali essay *Svādhikār Pramatta*, it is a critique of the contemporary political situation in India.

At the Cross Roads
An essay on the Indian political situation published in *The Modern Review*, July 1918.

The Message of the Forest
Tagore read this lecture on the occasion of the opening of the Festival of Fine Arts in Bangalore on 12 January 1919. An extract was published in *Karnataka*; it was also reproduced in *The Modern Review*, February 1919. This essay, based on the Bengali essay 'Tapoban' included in *Śāntiniketan* (1909–16) was reproduced in *The Modern Review*, May 1919. A revised form of this essay is to be found in *Creative Unity*.

Construction versus Creation
An address delivered at the Gujarati Literary Conference, Ahmedabad, on 2 April 1920. This was first included in *Lectures and Addresses* selected by Anthony X. Soares.[8]

A Cry for Peace
Published in *The Modern Review*, May 1919.

The Call of Truth
Published in *The Modern Review*, October 1921. This incisive criticism of the non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi evoked wide protests against Tagore. Gandhi himself replied to it in a memorable article entitled 'The Great Sentinel', *Young India*, 13 October 1921. Tagore's English essay is a translation of the Bengali address 'Satyer Ahvān', first read in August 1921, and later included in *Kālāntar* (1937).

The Union of Cultures
Published in *The Modern Review*, November 1921. This can be treated as an outline of Tagore's manifesto of Visva-Bharati, an international university. The idea was also expressed in his well-known Bengali essay 'Śikṣar Milan'. In a lecture at Pune on 24 September 1922 Tagore expressed a similar idea, 'a university which would help India's mind to concentrate and to be fully conscious of itself; free to seek its truth and make this truth its own whenever

[8] *Lectures and Addresses* (1928) is a collection of nine essays by Tagore. Barring 'Construction versus Creation', 'International Relations' and 'The Voice of Humanity', the rest of the essays—'My Life', 'My School', 'Civilization and Progress', 'What is Art?', 'Nationalism in India' and 'The Realization of the Infinite'—are to be found in *Talks in China*, *Personality*, *Nationalism* and *Sādhanā*. We have included those three essays, not included in any other book of Tagore. Soares, a Professor of English literature at the College, Baroda, wrote a Preface to this book.

found; to judge by its own standard, give expression to its own creative genius, and offer its wisdom to the guests who come from other parts of the world'.[9]

A Vision of India's History

The Bengali article 'Bhāratbarṣer Itihāser Dhāra' (1912), translated into English by Jadunath Sarkar, appeared in *The Modern Review*, August–September 1913, under the title 'My Interpretation of Indian History'. Dwijendranath Tagore wrote an article in *Prabāsī* (Śrāban 1319, i.e. 1913) in response to it. Tagore accepted some of his suggestions and incorporated them in a fresh English rendering which was published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, in 1923. It was also issued as a separate book by Visva-Bharati in 1951, ten years after the death of Tagore.

The Way to Unity

Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 2, July 1923 (pp. 83–98). An editorial note at the end of the paper says that 'Part of this paper was published in "Welfare".'

International Relations

Lecture delivered in Japan in 1924. First published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (1924), later included in *Lectures and Addresses* (1928).

The Indo-Iranians

Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 3, October 1923. Parts of it were later incorporated in chapter IV ('The Prophet') of *The Religion of Man*.

Notes and Comments

Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (January 1924). Partly based on Tagore's talks at Colombo urging for the revival of the lost 'consciousness of their (Sri Lanka's) unity with their Indian kinsmen', and partly on the appeals he made to create awareness for the importance of Visva-Bharati.

The Fourfold Way of India

Published in *The Modern Review*, August 1924.

The Schoolmaster

Published in *The Modern Review*, October 1924.

City and Village

Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, October 1924. This lecture was delivered in Italy at Turin on 21 June 1926. When published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* it evoked sharp criticism from M.N. Roy. See his article 'The Philosophy of Poverty', in *Masses of India*, No. 1, Paris, January 1925 (*Selected Works of M.N. Roy*, Vol. II, 1923–1927, edited by Sibnarayan Ray, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, pp. 341–46). Also quoted in full in Chinmohan Sehanabish, *Rabīndranāth o Biplabī Samāj*, Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1983, Appendix, pp. 189–97. A heavily edited version of this essay, not known by whom, appears in *Tagore for You* (1984).

[9] Quoted in Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabīndra Jībanī*, Vol. III, 1952, p. 101.

The Voice of Humanity
Included in *Lectures and Addresses* (1928). This lecture was delivered at Milan on 22 January 1925, i.e. during his first visit to Italy under Mussolini.

The Indian Ideal of Marriage
Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, July 1925. This essay was written, as indicated in the beginning, in response to Count Keyserling's request for his book (*Das Ehe Buch*) in German. This essay is based on the Bengali essay 'Bhāratīya Bibāher Ādarśa', to be found in *Rabīndra Racanābalī*, Vol. 13, published by the West Bengal Government.

The Cult of the Charka
Published in *The Modern Review*, September 1925. This is another criticism of Gandhian politics and particularly of the importance attached by Gandhi to *charka*. Tagore again brought up the Rammohun Roy episode in this article: 'the difference in our standpoints and temperaments has to make the Mahatma look upon Rammohun Roy as a pygmy, while I revere him as a giant.' Gandhi replied to it in an article 'The Poet and the Charka', in *Young India*, 5 November 1925.[10]

Judgment
Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, October 1925.

The Philosophy of Our People
Presidential address at the first Indian Philosophical Congress held on 19 December 1925. Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, January 1926. Its Bengali translation was published in *Prabāsī* (Māgh 1331, i.e. 1926).

The Rule of the Giant
Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, July 1926. This lecture was delivered at Dacca University.[11] This was also read at Andhra University on 5 November 1934.[12] An abridged version of this article, 'Organization', was published in *The Modern Review*, January 1930.

The Meaning of Art
Lecture delivered at Dacca University on 10 February 1926; later published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, April 1926. It was reprinted by Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, in 1969 with a preface by Mulk Raj Anand. See *The Religion of an Artist* (No. 47).

'American Experience'
First published in *Atlantic Monthly* and later reproduced in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April 1927) under the title 'Notes and Comments'. The present title has been given by us.

[10] See Krishna Kripalani, 'Gurudev and Gandhiji', *Tagore Studies*, edited by Bhudeb Choudhury, Tagore Research Institute, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 1–18. A perceptive essay analysing the points of view of the two great Indians.
[11] This as well as 'The Philosophy of Art' were delivered at Dacca, p. 307.
[12] See Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1968, p. 551.

The Principle of Literature
Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, July 1927.

The Function of a Library
Published in *Visva-Bharati Bulletin*, January 1929.

On Oriental Culture and Japan's Mission
Lecture delivered for the members of the Indo-Japanese Association at the Industrial Club, Tokyo, on 15 May 1929. It was published by the Indo-Japanese Association, Tokyo.

Ideals of Education
An address delivered at the Concordia, Tokyo, on 3 June 1929. Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, April–July 1929.

The Philosophy of Leisure
Address at the Fourth Triennial Conference of the National Council of Education of Canada, Victoria, on 6 April 1929. Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, April–July 1929.

India and Europe
Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, April–July 1929. Extract from an interview given in Canada and first published in *Canadian Forum*, Toronto, in May 1929.

Wealth and Welfare
Published in *The Modern Review*, February 1930. In all probability, this lecture was delivered in Japan during May and June 1929.

The Educational Mission of the Visva-Bharati
Lecture broadcast by Radio New York, on 10 November 1930. Later published in *The Modern Review*, June 1931.

Meeting of the East and the West
Address at a reception on 1 December 1930, Carnegie Hall, New York, by the Discussion Guild and the Indian Society. Source: *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 8, Part III, 1930–31. At the end of the meeting the host Mr Novik, said:

> The Poet feels that he has given his message to us. I wondered as I sat here what he would feel from this audience if each one of us were able to speak to him and to tell him what his message has meant to us. Probably for many of us there will be new inspiration in our individual living. After all, what we shall be as persons depends not upon chance but upon ourselves. And I think new inspiration has come to us in these moments.
>
> And maybe as he goes back to the East, he will carry our message to India, our hope that the day is not far distant when the East and the West shall meet indeed, when each may contribute to the common good of humanity.

My Pictures
The first article (dated 28 May 1930) appeared in the catalogue of Tagore's

exhibition at the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham. The second article is a lecture delivered on 2 July 1930 in London. It may be mentioned that the first exhibition of Tagore's paintings was arranged in Paris on 2 May 1930. This talk was published in *The Modern Review* (December 1930) along with one of his earliest drawings. *My Pictures* (III) appeared in a catalogue for Tagore's exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1930), with a foreword by A.K. Coomaraswamy.

The First and the Last Prophets of Persia
Summary of a speech at the New History Society, New York, on 7 December 1930. Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 8, Part IV, 1931–32.

My School
Published in *The Modern Review*, January 1931, with the following note: 'In course of the poet Rabindranath Tagore's talks with students in Moscow reproduced elsewhere in this number, Maria Steinhaus asked him: I have heard that yesterday you spoke about your educational work in India, and I would like to know how your school has combined its life work with its surroundings.' This is Tagore's reply.

International Goodwill
Summary of speech at the All People's Association, London, on 8 January 1931.

Lectures in Iran and Iraq
Tagore arrived in Iran on 13 April 1932 at the invitation of the Emperor Reza Shah Pehlavi and stayed there till the end of May. During this period he was given a rousing welcome at different places by writers and intellectuals, which impressed Tagore deeply. Soon after his return to India he told journalists in Karachi (31 May) that the reception in Persia 'came from the heart of the common people and was not merely an official welcome'. Again in Calcutta he said 'that a great Mahomedan world should ever feel eager to invite a poet of an alien tradition and with genuine fervour offer him a welcome, is a sign of the renaissance in Asia'. All these lectures are to be found in the appendix of *Pārasya Yātrī* (1985 edition).

Asia's Response to the Call of the New Age
An address delivered probably on 5 May 1932, the day Tagore was given a civic reception in Tehran. Published in *The Modern Review*, Vol. LII, No. 4, October 1932.

Can Science Be Humanized?
Published in *Visva-Bharati News*, Vol. II, No. 2, August 1933, p. 11.

Rammohun Roy
Presidential address at the Rammohun Roy death centenary meeting at Senate House, Calcutta, on 18 February 1933. Published in *The Modern Review*, March 1933.

'To the Youth of Hyderabad
Lecture delivered on 16 December 1933 and the autographed manuscript was given to Nawab Mehdi Nawaz Jung. It was first published in 1963 with a brief note by Padmaja Naidu. I have got the pamphlet through the courtesy of Sri Ananth Nath Das of Rabindra Bharati, Visva-Bharati.

'Women's Place in the World'
Address delivered at the All India Women's Conference, Calcutta, 24 December 1933 to 2 January 1934. Reprinted from the typed copy (Serial No. 9, File: Lectures and Address, No. 1) kept at Rabindra Bhavan.

Reply to the Madras Corporation Address
Tagore was given a civic reception on 22 October 1934 by the Madras Corporation. Published in *Visva-Bharati News*, Vol. III/V, November 1934, pp. 35–37.

The Religion of an Artist
The first section of this work, a lecture delivered in China in 1924, was included in *Talks in China*. The second section contains a lecture delivered at the University of Dacca in 1926 and was printed in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April 1926) under the title *Meaning of Art*, and also in *Dacca University Bulletin* (XII, 1926). Ten years later both the articles were revised by Tagore and were included in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (1936) under the present title. It was brought out as a separate book by Visva-Bharati in 1953.

To the Citizens of Delhi
Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. IV, May–June 1936, pp. 90–91). The lecture was in response to the public reception accorded to Tagore on 28 March 1936.

The Communal Award
Presidential address at a conference held in Calcutta on 15 July 1936 to discuss the Communal Award. First published by Dr Radhakumud Mukherjee, printed at Santiniketan Press by Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee.

Address at the Parliament of Religions
Presidential address at the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Parliament of Religions, Calcutta, March 1937. Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. III, Part I, May 1937.

China and India
An address delivered on the occasion of the opening of Cheena Bhavan at Santiniketan on 14 April 1937. Printed and published by Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee, Santiniketan Press.

To Subhas Chandra Bose
Translated by Tagore himself from the original Bengali address entitled *Deśanāyak* written in May 1939, later collected in *Kālāntar*. It was written soon after Bose's resignation from the post of President of the Indian National Congress.

Convocation Address at Gurukula Kangri
Convocation address to the graduates at the Gurukula, Kangri. Tagore could not be present at the Convocation. A typescript of the address is preserved at Rabindra Bhavan (File: Lectures and Addresses, No. 1, Serial No. 17).

Crisis in Civilization
Tagore's last public address, delivered on 14 April 1941. This is the authorized English translation of the Bengali essay, *Sabhyatār Saṃkaṭ*. The first draft was prepared by Kshitish Roy and Krishna Kripalani. It was finally revised by Tagore himself. Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. IX, No. ii) as well as in *The Modern Review* (May 1941). The editorial note in *Visva-Bharati News* says, 'it has been revised by Gurudev himself.'

III MISCELLANEOUS

A. Open Letters, Speeches, Tributes, etc.

1 *The Problem of India*
Letter written to Myron H. Phelps[13] on 4 January 1909. This must be regarded, in the absence of any other evidence, as Tagore's first specimen of English prose. It appeared in *The Modern Review*, August 1910, pp. 184–87. Parts of this letter have been printed in *Ciṭhipatra* (12). In view of the importance of the letter, the full text is reprinted here.

2 *Spiritual Civilization*
Letter written on 16 December 1911 to Myron H. Phelps. This letter was first published in 1933 in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. II, Nos. 4 and 5, October–November, pp. 27–28). The prefatory note from the editor informs us, 'He [Mr Phelps] died some years back and among the papers left by him there are a good few letters from Rabindranath. . . . In it there is a very interesting discussion on the civilization of India.' Contrary to the popular notion, these letters testify that Tagore was not totally unknown outside India before the publication of the English *Gitanjali*.

3 *National Language of India*

I

In response to Gandhi's letter dated 21 January 1918 seeking Tagore's view on the adoption of Hindi as the national language of India.

II

Tagore sent this message to the All India Hindi Literature Conference held

[13] M.H. Phelps was an American lawyer. Most probably, he came to know of Tagore and his school through his son Rathindranath studying at Illinois (1906–09). Phelps started the Cosmopolitan Club in Illinois. He came to India in 1922 and visited Santiniketan.

at Madras on 26 March 1937. Reprinted from Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. IV, p. 132.

4 *The Object and Subject of a Story*
Published in *The Modern Review*, September 1918. Tagore wrote this, the editor informs us, in answer to the letter of a lady criticizing the publication of his novel *Ghare Bāire*, an English translation of which under the title 'At Home and Outside' was being serialized in *The Modern Review*.

5 *Hindu Intercaste Marriage Validating Bill*
This letter was written by Tagore on 19 December 1918 from Santiniketan in response to R.G. Pradhan, editor of *Bhārat Sevak*, a Marathi magazine, who asked for his opinion on V.J. Patel's Bill for validating marriages between Hindus of different castes and sub-castes. The letter was reprinted in *The Modern Review* (February 1919).

6 *Vernaculars for the M.A. Degree*
When Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee proposed the introduction of an M.A. programme in different Indian languages and literatures in Calcutta University, many scholars were sceptical about its justification. This letter by Tagore to an unidentified correspondent seeking his opinion (published in *The Modern Review*, November 1918) is an interesting document in the debate on the place of Indian languages in Indian universities.

7 *'This Youth which Lies Hidden in My Heart'*
Published in *The Modern Review* (February 1919, pp. 190–91) with the following prefatory note: 'The students of the various educational institutions of Bangalore presented a reverent address to Sir Rabindranath Tagore, on the occasion of his visit to that city. The poet gave a very affectionate and humorous reply of which a report extracted from the *Karnataka* is given below.'

Tagore toured South India extensively during January and February 1919. During this period he delivered his well-known address 'The Message of the Forest' in Bangalore, and 'The Centre of Indian Culture' at the National University established by Annie Besant.

8 *On Some Educational Questions*
During his stay in Bangalore, Tagore was interviewed by V. Subrahmanya Iyer on the eve of the publication of the report of the Calcutta University Commission. Iyer's note published in *The Mysore Economic Journal* under the caption, 'Sir Rabindranath Tagore's Views on Some Educational Questions' was reproduced in *The Modern Review* (April 1919, pp. 389–90) which is our source. Since this was the time when Tagore was contemplating to establish a new centre of learning—Visva-Bharati—his opinions expressed here are of great interest to historians of Indian education.

9 *'Poet's Contribution to Your Noble Work'*
Tagore's response to Gandhi's letter dated 5 April 1919 asking for a message on the occasion of launching Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act.

10 *'When Badges of Honour Make Our Shame Glaring'*
One of the most well-known letters of Tagore. It was addressed to Lord Chelmsford, the Governor-General of India, on 30 May 1919.

On 13 April an unarmed peaceful crowd, consisting mostly of villagers, assembled in an enclosed ground, known as Jallianwalla Bagh, to attend a meeting of protest against the infamous 'Rowlatt Act'. The Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, General Dyer, ordered firing without warning on the crowd. The official estimate spoke of 379 killed; unofficial accounts gave much higher figures. Since the press was already gagged it was almost impossible to know the exact figure. Later, before the Hunter Commission, Dyer regretted that his ammunition ran out and the lanes adjoining the ground were too narrow to allow entry to an armoured car. He wanted to produce 'a moral effect' on the Indians, his methods included public flogging, insisting on natives bowing before all white men, making Indians crawl on a road where a white woman had been insulted. Amal Hom, who reached Amritsar that evening at the insistence of Kalinath Ray, the editor of *Tribune*, heard the British soldiers rejoicing at the firing at Jallianwalla Bagh: 'Lots of fun going on there.' Martial law was imposed in Punjab and Kalinath Roy was arrested from the *Tribune* office. It is not known how the news of the Punjab tragedy reached Tagore at Santiniketan. His niece Sarala Devi, wife of Pandit Rambhuj Datta Chaudhuri, wrote a letter to Tagore but that did not reach him. However Tagore received the news by 22 May, as evidenced from a letter written by him to Ranu Adhikari. He contacted several political leaders in Calcutta urging them to organize a protest meeting, without success. Finally, he decided to renounce the Knighthood, as a symbolic act of protest.

There was, of course, no official reply to the letter. *Englishman* condemned Tagore for what it thought, was impertinence. It wrote, 'It will not make a ha'porth of difference. As if it mattered a brass farthing whether Sir Rabindranath Tagore approved of the Government's policy or not! As if it mattered to the reputation, the honour and the security of British rule and justice whether this Bengalee poet remained a knight or a plain Babu.'[14]

Tagore's action made his countrymen proud but it offended many of his English friends and acquaintances, including Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate, who declined the invitation to a meeting at Oxford where Tagore spoke the following year. This letter had a far-reaching effect on his reputation in England. It is also important to remember that although Tagore was the first to protest against the British barbarity it was hardly appreciated by the leaders of the Indian National Congress at that time.[15] Gandhi surrendered the Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal and Boer War medal on 11 August 1920 also in protest against the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre.

It may be pointed out that the renouncement of the Knighthood by Tagore was not accepted by the government. The Private Secretary to the Viceroy wrote the following letters to Tagore.

[14] Quoted in Amal Hom, *Puruṣottam Rabīndranāth*, Calcutta, 1961, p. 80.
[15] Ibid., pp. 107–13.

Viceregal Lodge, Simla
12th June 1919

My dear Sir Rabindranath
I am directed to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 31st May to the address of His Excellency the Viceroy in which you announce your desire to resign the honour of Knighthood conferred on you in 1915. The matter is receiving attention and a further communication will be made to you in due course.

Yours sincerely,
S.R. Hignell

This was followed by another letter dated 20 June 1919.

My dear Sir Rabindranath
In continuation of my letter of June 12th I am directed to inform you that His Excellency the Viceroy is unable himself to relieve you of your title of Knighthood, and that, in the circumstances of the case, he does not propose to make any recommendation on the subject to His Majesty the King Emperor.

Yours sincerely,
S.R. Hignell

Both the letters are preserved in Rabindra Bhavan. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* published the following news on 19 September 1919.

> The following appears in the 'Times' dated August 2 received by the last mail: Mr Montagu states in a written answer that the title conferred on Sir Rabindranath Tagore has not been revoked as he asked in his letter to Viceroy.[16]

11 *'A Great Crime . . . in the Name of Law'*
Message to the first memorial meeting of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre held on 13 April 1920 under the presidentship of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The meeting was organized by the Bombay branches of the Home Rule League and the National Union. The message was read by C.F. Andrews.[17]

Tagore was in England the following year when the Dyer debates were concluded in both Houses of Parliament. He was shocked by 'the unashamed condonation of brutality' by the British newspapers. (See letters dated 22 July, 13 August and 7 September, *Letters to a Friend*, 1928.) Rathindranath informs us that his father 'told Mr Montagu that it was not so much the punishment of Dyer that India asked for, but moral condemnation of the crime by the British nation' (*On the Edges of Time*, 1958, p. 130). Not only was Dyer acquitted, but *The Morning Post*, a newspaper of the Tories, raised a fund of twenty-six thousand pounds, and gifted it to him.

12 *On British Mentality in Relation to India*
This letter published in *The Modern Review* (April 1921) was sent from abroad, probably from the USA, where Tagore was staying at that time.

[16] Source, Somendranath Basu, *Sāmayik Patre Rabīndra Prasaṅga, Prabāsī*, p. 450.
[17] Source: Hom, *Puruṣottam Rabīndranāth*, pp. 93–95.

13 '*The Efficacy of Ahimsa*'
Soon after the adoption of the resolution of launching of Satyagraha by the Congress at its December 1921 session at Ahmedabad, Tagore wrote this open letter to the famous Gujarati poet Nana Lal on 1 February 1922. It was published in *The Bengalee* on 3 February, two days before the Chauri Chaura incident—twenty-two policemen were burnt alive by a frenzied mob and Gandhi called off the movement on 11 February.

14 *Message to the Young*
Excerpts from Tagore's address at the YMCA Colombo on 13 October 1922. Published in *Visva-Bharati News*, III/1, July 1934, pp. 5–7.

15 *Introducing Elmhirst*
L.K. Elmhirst came to Santiniketan on 27 September 1921. While a student of Agriculture at Cornell, he met Tagore in early 1921 and was inspired by his ideas of rural construction. He became the moving spirit behind Sriniketan, the rural construction department of Visva-Bharati.

16 *Farewell to Dr M. Winternitz*
M. Winternitz, the German Sanskritist—the second European Professor at Visva-Bharati, the first being Sylvain Levi—came to Santiniketan in 1922. Reprinted from *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (October 1923).

17 *To My Ceylon Audience*
Tagore visited Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in October 1922. This was printed in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (January 1924).

18 *Letter to Lord Lytton*
Lord Lytton's comment on Indian women (at a meeting of policemen at Dacca in July 1924) that, 'the thing that has disturbed me more than anything else since I came to India is to find that mere hatred of authority can drive Indian men to induce Indian women to invent offences against own honour merely to bring discredit upon Indian policemen',[18] agitated the political leaders, many of whom strongly condemned Lord Lytton for his insinuations against Indian women. Tagore, urged by several leaders, wrote this letter on 22 August 1924. Lytton's reply was courteous, but he denied the allegation against him. Tagore wrote in his second letter (31 August 1924): 'a considerable number of my countrymen, . . . are ready to challenge your government to trustworthy evidence in support of your statement even about those rare cases for a particular type of conspiracy against public officials.'[19] Lytton again responded politely without withdrawing his criticism against the political leaders and appealed them to restrain 'from vilifying the [police] force as a whole and to assist me in my efforts to purge it of the defects the existence of which I have never denied'.

[18] *The Statesman*, 6 August 1924, quoted in *Prabāsi*, see Somendranath Basu, *Sāmayik Patre Rabīndra Prasanga*, p. 451. For other details see Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabīndra Jībani*, Vol. II, pp. 141–42.

[19] Quoted in *Prabāsi*. See Somendranath Basu, *Sāmayik Patre Rabīndra Prasanga*, p. 78.

19 *Birth Control Movement*
Tagore's letter (30 September 1925) to Margaret Sanger, editor, *Birth Control Review*, was published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (5 January 1926). Sanger came to India ten years later in 1935 and met both Gandhi and Tagore though no records are available of the talks she had with these two persons who held opposite views on birth control. *The Madras Mail* (7 December 1935) reported that she interviewed Gandhi and Tagore, and that the latter 'promised his moral support for her movement'.[20]

20 *'Knighthood'*
This statement of Tagore appeared in *The Modern Review* (February 1926, p. 158). Certain sections in the media, particularly in Europe and America, continued to prefix 'Sir' to Tagore's name. Although it was not possible for Tagore to protest on each occasion, some of his critics interpreted his silence as consent. In this statement he made it clear, once and for all, that, 'I do not like any addition to my name. . . .'

21 *Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das*
Chittaranjan Das died on 16 June 1925. This is Tagore's message of condolence.

22 *Romain Rolland*
Written on 5 October 1925. Included in *Rolland and Tagore*, edited by Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani (1945).

23 *Farewell Address to Carlo Formichi*
This address was delivered by Tagore on the eve of Professor Carlo Formichi's departure from Santiniketan in 1925. Published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (IV/1, April 1926, pp. 91–93).

Formichi (1871–1943) was a Buddhist scholar and Sanskritist working at the University of Rome. He translated Ashvaghosha's *Buddha Carita* into Italian. He acted as Tagore's interpreter during his visit to Italy in January 1925, on his way back home from Beunos Aires. Impressed by his scholarship Tagore invited him to Santiniketan. An enthusiastic supporter of Fascism and Mussolini, Formichi came to Santiniketan in November 1925 along with Guiseppe Tucci (1894–1984), his colleague at the University of Rome, who was also a Sanskritist. Not only did Mussolini send these scholars at the expense of the state, but also a library of Italian classics for Visva-Bharati. Formichi was the willing instrument through whom Mussolini wanted to lure Tagore and to make full use of his reputation in defence of his political activities.

24 *Philosophy of Fascism*
This letter addressed to C.F. Andrews and published in *Manchester Guardian* on 5 August 1926 has a long and exciting history, drawing the final curtain on Tagore's unfortunate visit to Italy. The story begins in January 1925 when Tagore spent a few days in Italy and met Formichi. At that time Tagore was

[20] Nepal Majumdar, *Jātiyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. III, p. 632.

warmly welcomed by the general public but the government-controlled press made him a target of attack mainly for his candid criticism of Western nationalism. Towards the end of the year Carlo Formichi was sent by Mussolini to Santiniketan. Tagore, then anxiously looking for funds and cooperation from different countries for realizing his dream of an international institution, was overwhelmed by Mussolini's and particularly by the unexpected generosity—a large gift of Italian classics—which he described as 'a spirit of magnanimity'.[21]

It may not be true, as Nepal Majumdar suggests on the evidence of a news item published in the *Sunday Chronicle*, that 'Fascism was taking a grip in India at that time and Formichi was sent for some obscure reason to the Visva-Bharati'.[22] But several persons close to Tagore—his son Rathindranath, his nephew Surendranath and his secretary P.C. Mahalanobis—were suspicious of the designs of Formichi and wanted Tagore not to accept the invitation from the Italian government. Tagore ignored their suggestions. He reached Naples on 30 May 1926 and stayed in Italy till 22 June. During this period Mussolini behaved with exemplary courtesy and pretended innocence. Tagore made several laudatory remarks about Mussolini's personality and the achievements of the Fascists. They were flamboyantly flashed, quite often in distorted form, in the government-controlled newspapers, which shocked intellectuals all over Europe. Tagore's companions realized that Tagore was under the strict vigilance of Formichi and was not allowed to meet anyone critical of the regime. Even Tagore's meeting with Croce, a suspect in the government's eyes, was arranged in an unusual manner and the conversation they had did not go beyond polite exchanges. Tagore, as well his associates, being ignorant of Italian, were unaware of the distortion of his comments by the press. Mahalanobis and Rathindranath employed an Austrian lady to translate the press-cuttings into English. 'We discovered', writes the poet's son, 'that she was a well-known international spy and was in the pay role of Mussolini.'[23] Their apprehensions were confirmed by a Cambridge-educated Italian girl whom Mahalanobis met by chance. Tagore, however, still under the spell of Mussolini and a suave and cunning Formichi, preferred to overlook the gentle warnings of his companions till he met Romain Rolland eagerly waiting for him at Villeneuve.

Rolland, in constant touch with many anti-Fascist leaders and political workers driven out of Italy, knew the machinations of Mussolini very well. His fascinating journal *L'Inde* (1951)[24] records the tense situation that continued for several days in persuading Tagore to realize his folly and the treachery of his host. Rolland arranged a meeting with Georges Duhamel, a leading French journalist, who found Tagore's reply to his questions vague and evasive. Rolland restrained the journalist from castigating Tagore as an egotist

[21] For details, see Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis, *Kabir Sange Urupe*, Mitra o Ghosh, Calcutta, 1969, particularly Abanti Kumar Sanyal's well-researched work, *Prasaṅga: Romain Rolland*, Papyrus, Calcutta, 1991. For different perspectives see Nityapriya Ghosh, 'Uṣār Duāre Pākhir Matan', *Ḍāk Gharer Harkarā*, Prama, Calcutta, 1985; Arabinda Poddar, *Rabīndranāth Rājnaitik Byaktittva*, Uccharan, Calcutta, 1982.

[22] Nepal Majumdar, *Jātiyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. II, p. 323.

[23] Rathindranath Tagore, *On the Edges of Time*, Visva-Bharati, 1958, p. 157.

[24] My source is its Bengali translation—*Bhāratbarṣa* (Radical Book Club, Calcutta, 1976, 2nd reprint 1989), translated by Abanti Kumar Sanyal. This is the first translation of the journal in any foreign language.

and a victim of lust for fame. Rolland thought that even a straightforward narration of the circumstances in which he met Croce would be telling enough. Tagore however hesitated to denounce his generous host but passed through a period of intense mental agony. At Zurich he met Signora Salvadori and her husband who were victims of Fascist atrocities.[25] At Vienna he met the Socialist leader Modigliani, from whom he heard the gory details of the murder of Matteoti, the anti-Fascist member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and also Angelica Balban who had been living in Vienna since 1921 after her estrangement with the Bolsheviks.[26] Now fully convinced of the nature of Mussolini's politics, Tagore wrote a letter to Formichi (21 July): 'I am convinced; to support Fascism is a moral suicide for me.' He also wrote a letter to C.F. Andrews which was published in the *Manchester Guardian.*

The original letter was either heavily edited or a shorter version of it was sent to *Manchester Guardian*. Later a longer version was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (October 1926) under the heading 'Notes and Comments', without mentioning that it was addressed to Andrews or that parts of it had been published in *Manchester Guardian*. The full text has been reprinted in *Ciṭhipatra* (Vol. 12). The *Manchester Guardian* text, being the first anti-Fascist statement of Tagore, is as important as the full text of the letter. We have printed the full text at the end of this note.

This letter drew the attention of the whole of Europe. Rolland translated the most outspoken parts of it into French and got it published in *Europe* on 15 August. It was reprinted in several Socialist and Communist newspapers in the continent the next day. Formichi gave a prompt reply repudiating the charges of Tagore and the Italian press initiated a vigorous programme of reviling Tagore. Formichi's letter (also published in *Manchester Guardian*) which is not easily available, is reproduced here for the benefit of those interested in this unseemly controversy.

> My attention has been called to statements published in your paper by the Indian poet Rabindranath concerning Italy and Fascism. It was I who made the arrangements for the poet's two visits to Italy, accompanied him during his stay in the country, and acted as his interpreter both in public and private. I feel that I must make certain facts clear in connexion with his visits to Italy and with the interviews [that] he accorded. There are perhaps two points on which my memory of facts might help Dr Rabindranath Tagore to reconstruct the story of his relations with Italy; that he needs my assistance for this purpose may be gathered from a letter which he wrote to Mr Andrews and which has already been published.
>
> With regard to Dr Tagore's first visit to Italy, it is necessary to add his own account that it gave rise to a regrettable misunderstanding. Certain Fascist elements in Italy had seen in that visit the result of the activities of their opponents who were supposed to have invited the poet to Milan for political purposes; the poet himself was accused of having made

[25] Rabindranath Tagore's interview with an Italian exile's wife, *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 3, October 1926, pp. 299–303.

[26] Angelica Balban, *My Life as a Rebel*, Greenwood Publishers, New York, 1965, pp. 312–14. Quoted in Chinmohan Sehanabish, *Rabīndranāth o Biplabī Samāj*, Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1925, pp. 116–19. All these interviews have been included in this volume.

allusions disparaging to the Fascist movement in his speeches and a short poem on Italy. National feeling was much aroused in the consequence. I had been with him during the whole of his visit and was well aware that neither in his words nor in his intentions had he ever thought of interfering in the politics of a country which he was visiting for the first time.[27] No one better than I knew that he had come to Italy only to receive the homage of affection due to a great poet, and I myself, being a Sanskrit scholar and wholly outside politics, had invited him and arranged, together with other friends, for his reception. Naturally, I regretted the misunderstanding and was anxious for an opportunity to remove the cause of it. The chance was not long in presenting itself.

Dr Tagore invited me to come to his institution at Santiniketan as Visiting Professor; every year, in fact, he invites some Western scholar in Indology to lecture to his advanced students in Sanskrit. My esteemed colleagues Sylvain Levi of Paris; Maurice Winternitz of Prague; and Sten Konow of Christiania, had preceded me; and all of them had done their best to contribute to the advancement of the institution through their scholarship and the gift of books to the library. I knew that the students regretted that Italian books were lacking, whereas there was abundance of English, French, and German books.

Before sailing for India I assured our Prime Minister that Dr Tagore was far from being a political intriguer, and that on returning to Bombay from Italy he had expressed himself to the journalists who interviewed him in the most correct manner as far as the Fascist movement was concerned. I also asked Signor Mussolini to grant me a gift of Italian books for the library at Santiniketan, in order to promote cultural relations between the two countries.

Signor Mussolini was quite convinced by my assurances as to the poet's attitude and very generously presented me with an almost complete library of Italian classics to be conveyed to the Santiniketan library. I thereupon sailed for India, and on my arrival at Santiniketan Dr Tagore was much touched and very grateful for the gift, of which he recognized the disinterestedness and the noble aim which had inspired it—namely the desire to establish a channel for the exchange of ideas between Italy and India. The last words of his cable of acknowledgement to Signor Mussolini were:

> I assure you that such an expression of sympathy from you as representative of the Italian people will open up a channel of communication for exchange of culture between your country and ours having every possibility of developing into an event of great historical significance.

I spent four months at Santiniketan, and the poet had every opportunity of knowing me, and I was fortunate enough to deserve his esteem and affection. We seldom spoke of politics, and when he decided to come to Italy a second time[28] he spontaneously said that in the lectures which he would deliver there he would avoid any subject connected with

[27] To keep the record straight it may be mentioned that Tagore visited Italy for the first time in October 1878, at the age of seventeen, on his way to England. [*Editor*]

[28] Actually this was Tagore's third visit to Italy, the second as a celebrity.

politics, because he declared, 'politics always lead to controversy'.

Having to make the arrangements for his reception, I sent word from Santiniketan to the Italian Foreign Office that Tagore intended to visit Italy, and asked whether I should apply to private committees or whether the Government would prefer to provide for the comfort of the poet. Signor Mussolini at once replied extending the hospitality of the Italian Government to him and his retinue. Dr Tagore greatly appreciated this token of kindness on the part of the Italian Premier, his only anxiety being whether his health would permit him to perform the journey.

In the meanwhile I sailed for Italy, and on May 14, I received a cable from Dr Tagore informing me that he and his party were about to sail for Naples. From the moment of his landing in that port I was always by his side introducing people to him and acting as his interpreter. On May 31, the poet met Signor Mussolini for the first time. I was present at the interview. Signor Mussolini understands English fairly well, so that I had mainly to translate into English the Premier's phrases in Italian. Although they met for the first time they had had so much sympathy for each other from afar that the interview was most cordial. The conversation ran chiefly on the cultural relations to be established between Italy and India and on the lecture which the poet was to deliver in Rome. With almost paternal anxiety Signor Mussolini insisted that the poet should not over-strain himself but take a real rest in Rome; he was extremely pleased when Dr Tagore informed him that he would stay a whole fortnight in Rome instead of a week. Turning to me, he suggested the chief places of interest which Dr Tagore should visit, adding: 'You have only to let me know whatever may be agreeable to you and I shall be only too happy to provide it for you.'

I escorted the poet back to his hotel and asked him his impressions. 'Without doubt,' he said, 'a great personality. There is such a massive strength in that head that one cannot help being reminded of Michelangelo's chisel. And at the same time he is a simple man who makes one feel that it is impossible for him to be the cruel tyrant whom so many are pleased to depict.' A reporter who understood and spoke English was then admitted, and asked the poet for a short statement representing what he felt about modern Italy. Dr Tagore at once penned the following words: 'Let me dream that from the fire-bath the immortal soul of Italy will come out clothed in quenchless light.'

The poet's admiration for Mussolini went on increasing on account of the reports he heard from various authoritative quarters. On returning from a visit to a certain foreign personage, whose name I am not at liberty to mention, Dr Tagore declared to me that he henceforth entertained no doubt about the splendid future of Italy, that as long as Mussolini lived Italy was safe, that history had always been made by great men, that we were to be envied in having this great man, and that he knew at last how to answer our detractors as soon as he should cross the Italian frontier. This feeling of genuine admiration for Mussolini the poet repeated to the reporters who swarmed around him, although it is true that to those who asked him his opinion of the Fascist movement he replied that he had had no opportunity of studying its history and

character. I always took the greatest care to translate his words faithfully to those reporters who were ignorant of English. The majority, however, could communicate directly with him. I wish to emphasize the fact that I acted as his interpreter in nearly all these interviews, and that only when I was unavoidably absent I allowed Dr Assagioli to take my place.

The poet's stay in Rome could not be the rest intended by Mussolini. But this was not in the least due to a 'chalked path of programme'. Official receptions were reduced to a minimum and limited to those which might be agreeable to Dr Tagore, notably the visits to the King, to the Governor of Rome and to the University. The crowd of reporters and admirers asking for autographs was a great strain, but in the afternoons he was able to drive out wherever he pleased although he often preferred to remain in his room owing to heart trouble.

On the eve of his departure from Rome on June 14, Dr Tagore was again received by Mussolini. This second interview was even more cordial than the first. The poet said to the Premier that there is a creative force lying dormant in the intimate nature of all things. It is the exclusive call of a great personality to set that force working. Science provides the materials, the personality takes possession of them and, waking up the soil which is in them, accomplishes the work of creation. Italy provided with a personality seemed to him the fittest medium for bringing the Asiatic and European civilizations close to each other for allowing the dream and mission of his whole existence to become a living reality. 'You are, Excellency,' he added, 'the most misrepresented man in the world.' 'I know it', Signor Mussolini answered smiling, 'but how can I help it?' The conversation then turned on the subject of the scholarships to be created in order to provide for an exchange of students between Italy and India. The poet further declared that he greatly wished to make the personal acquaintance of the great Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, whose philosophy is so akin to that of India. Signor Mussolini asked me to arrange the interview, as Croce was absent from home. This I did by telegram and the interview took place the following day.[29] Dr Tagore finally expressed the wish to possess a portrait of Mussolini. The request was immediately granted, and the Premier sent him a beautiful handsomely framed photograph of himself, on which he wrote the words, 'with deep admiration', followed by his signature.

I accompanied Tagore during the rest of his journey through Italy which was a triumphal progress, until he crossed the frontier at Domodossola on June 1922. A cordial letter from Dr Tagore, then at Villeneuve, dated June 15, contained the following phrase: 'My mind is drinking copious draughts of peace and rest, and I feel gloriously happy.' There was no hint of the distortion which publicity sometimes makes of the feature of a poet, 'whose chief value is not in his opinions, but in his creations'. I could not quite grasp the meaning of this hint at the time.

A second letter dated July 7 from Zurich then reached me. Dr Tagore wrote that he felt very unhappy because since he had left Italy numerous facts had been brought to his notice about the methods of

[29] The account given by Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis in her book is quite different. See also the notes to Section IV (Tagore's Conversations with Croce).

Fascism which challenged the judgement of humanity and prevented him from remaining silently neutral. Twenty days later a third letter reached me. It announced war and brought under my eyes the writing that has given rise to the present statement.

Tagore sent a copy of his letter to Andrews (that evoked protest from Formichi) to *The Modern Review* also. But surprisingly it was not published there. It is necessary to point out that both *Prabāsī* and *The Modern Review* were critical of Tagore's condemnation of Fascism. *Prabāsī* (Āśvin 1333, i.e. 1926) detected 'short-sightedness' and 'lack of principle' in Tagore in this letter and ridiculed his advisers. *The Modern Review* (September 1926) was equally harsh:

> Tagore rebukes the Fascists for many crimes which they may have committed some in their private (national) life, but which Tagore somehow found it after he left Italy enjoying Fascist hospitality to the fullest and thinking the Fascists hoodwinked Tagore in more than one way. They gave him such a whirl of nice experiences during his short stay in Italy that he could never for a moment dream that even the Fascists had a darker side to their character. They also published in the Fascist press exaggerated recounts of Tagore's views on their country and countrymen. Tagore found out that the truth about Fascism evidently from non-Italians outside Italy and the false nature of the statements printed as emanating from him by reading translations of cuttings from the Italian press. We are at a loss to give any opinion on this sudden *denoeument.* (p. 344)

Tagore wrote a strong letter to Ramananda Chatterji expressing his unhappiness at the sarcasm of *Prabāsī.* Rani Mahalanobis's letter to Amal Hom (29 October 1926) also refers to the poet's unhappiness and agony because of the silence of his friends on the stand taken by *Prabāsī.*[30]

The full text of the letter, part of which was published in *Manchester Guardian* on 5 August 1926, is given below.[31]

Against Fascism

(Letter written to C.F. Andrews)

Vienna
20 July 1926

My Friend,
My mind is passing through a conflict. I have my love and gratitude for the people of Italy. I deeply appreciate their feeling of admiration for me which is so genuine and generous. On the other hand the Italy revealed in Fascism alienates herself from my own ideal picture of that country which I should love to cherish in my heart. I fervently hope that this movement is not in harmony with the true nature of Italy, and that it is only a momentary eruption on her surface life. The painful facts about this movement that are daily coming to my notice since I have left Italy make them almost a matter of personal grievance for me because of the

[30] Mahalanobis, *Kabir Sange Urupe,* pp. 210–16.

[31] Source: *Cithipatra* , Vol. 12, edited by Bhabatosh Datta. Professor Datta has informed me that the original letter is preserved in Darlington and that he procured a typed copy of it.

assurance I have had from the people of that land of their regard for my ownself.

You know that I had my first introduction to Italy when I was invited to Milan last year. It takes long to study the mind of a people but not to feel their heart when that heart opens itself. I was in the town only for a few days and in that short time I realized that the people really loved me. One can claim, rightly or wrongly, praise as one's desert, but love is a surprise every time that it comes. I was strongly moved by that surprise when I found loving friends and not merely kind hosts in the people of Italy. It grieved me deeply, and I felt almost ashamed, when I suddenly fell ill and had to sail back home before I could fulfil my engagements in all other towns.

Then followed the magnificent gift from Mussolini, an almost complete library of Italian literature for my institution. It was a great surprise to me. In this greeting I felt the touch of a personality which could express itself in this manner in an appropriate action of unstinted magnificence.

This helped me to make up my mind to visit Italy once again in spite of the misgivings created by the reports reaching us in India about the character of the Fascist movement. I could gather from the literature that had come to my notice that the Fascist movement contained in it elements that were against my ideals, that it was tainted by conspiracy, dealing its blows in secret, driving the corrupt politics of Europe towards barefaced barbarity. But lately we have lost our faith in all mutually recriminating reports from the Western countries. For it is an open secret that along with the army and navy and air craft the bigger nations of the West think it necessary to maintain their organizations of the world-wide propaganda of misrepresentation. Neither did I have any qualification nor the intention to dabble in politics which specially concerns any of the European countries. And this was why I wanted to keep my mind neutral when I came to Italy. But we live in a whirlwind to talk today and an individual like myself is compelled to contribute to that universal noise, dragged by the chain of *Karma* as we say in our country.

I allowed myself to fall a victim to this relentless *Karma* with its ever-lengthening coil of consequence when I succumbed to the importunity of press interviewers in Italy.

An interview is a dangerous trap in which our unwary opinions are not only captured but mutilated. Words that come out of a moment's mood are meant to be forgotten, but when they are snap-shotted, most often our thoughts in them are presented in a grotesque posture which is an irony of accident. The camera in this case being also a living mind the picture becomes a composite one in which two dissimilar features of mentality have a misalliance that is likely to be unhappy and undignified.

My interviewers in Italy were the products of three personalities—that of the reporter, the interpreter and mine. Over and above that, there evidently was a hum in the atmosphere of another insistent and universal whisper which without our knowing it, mingled in all our talks. Being ignorant of Italian I had no means of checking the result of this

concoction. The only precaution which I could take was to repeat emphatically to all my listeners that I had no opportunity to study the history and character of Fascism.

But since then I have had the chance of knowing the contents of some of these interviews from the newspaper cuttings that my friends have gathered and translated for me. And I was not surprised to find in them what was inevitable. Through misunderstanding, wrong emphasis, natural defects in the means of communication, and the preoccupation of the national mind, some of these writings have been made to convey that I have given my deliberate opinion on Fascism, expressing my unqualified admiration.

This time it was not directly the people of Italy whose hospitality I enjoyed, but that of Mussolini himself as the head of the Government.

This was no doubt an act of kindness, but somewhat unfortunate for me. For, always and everywhere official vehicles, though comfortable, move only along the chalked path of programme too restricted to lead to any places of significance, or persons of daring individuality; they are for providing visitors only with specially selected morsels of experience.

The opinions which I could gather in an atmosphere of distraction were enthusiastically unanimous in the praise of Mussolini for having rescued Italy in a most critical moment of her history from the brink of ruination. In Rome I came to know a professor, a genuinely spiritual character, a seeker of peace who was strongly convinced not only of the necessity but of the philosophy of Fascism. About the necessity I am not competent to discuss, but about the philosophy I am doubtful. For it costs very little to fashion a suitable philosophy in order to mitigate the rudeness of facts that secretly hurt one's conscience. One thing that surprised me most, coming from the mouths of fervent patriots, that the Italian people, owing to their unreasoning impulsive nature, had proved their incapacity to govern themselves, and therefore in the inevitable logic of things they lent themselves to be governed from the outside by strong hands. However these are the facts that immediately and exclusively concern Italy herself, the validity even of which has sometimes been challenged by European critics. But whatever may be the case, the methods and the principle of this Fascism concern all humanity, and it is absurd to imagine that I could ever support a movement which ruthlessly suppresses freedom of expression, enforces observances that are against individual conscience, and walks through a blood-stained path of violence and stealthy crime. I have said it over and over again that the aggressive spirit of nationalism and of imperialism, religiously cultivated by most of the nations of the West, is a menace to the whole world. The demoralization which it produces in European politics is sure to have disastrous effects, especially upon the peoples of the East, who are helpless to resist Western methods of exploitation. It would be most foolish, if it were not almost criminal, for me to express my admiration for a political ideal which openly declares its loyalty to brute force as the motive power of civilization. That barbarism is not altogether compatible with material prosperity may be taken for granted, but the cost is terribly

great—it is fatal. This worship of unscrupulous force as the vehicle of nationalism keeps ignited the fire of international jealousy which is for universal incendiarism, a fearful orgy of devastation. The mischief of the infection of this moral aberration is great because today the human races have come close together and any process of destruction once set going does its work in an enormously wholesale manner. Knowing all this could I be credited to having played my fiddle while an unholy fire was being fed with human sacrifice?

I was greatly amused in reading in a Fascist organ how the writer vehemently decrying pantheistic philosophy of the passive and meditative East, comparing with it the vigorous self-assertion and fury of efficiency which he acknowledges to have been borrowed by his people from their modern schoolmasters in America. This has suggested to my mind the possibility of the idea of Fascism being an infection from across the Atlantic.

The unconscious irony in this paper lies in the fact of the writer's using with unction the name of Christianity in this context, the religion which had its origin in the East. He evidently does not realize that if Christ were born again in this world he would forcibly have been turned back from New York had he come there from outside, if for nothing else, at least for the want of the necessary amount of dollars to be shown to the gatekeeper. Or if he had been born in that land, Ku Klux Klan would secretly have knocked him to death or have lynched him. For did he not give utterance to the political blasphemy that blessed are the meek, thus insulting the Nordic right to rule the world? And the economic heresy that blessed are the poor? Would he not have been put into prison for twenty or more years for saying that it was as easy for the prosperous to reach the kingdom of heaven as for the camel to pass through the eyes of a needle? The Fascist professor deals a pen-thrust against what he calls our pantheism which as a word has no synonym in our language nor as a doctrine any place in our philosophy. He does not seem to have realized that the Christian idea that God remains essentially what he is while manifesting himself in the Son's being belongs to the same principle as our principle of immanence. The divinity of God according to it accepts humanity for its purpose of self-revelation and bridges the infinite gulf between them. This idea has glorified all human beings, has had the effect in the Christian West to emancipate individuals from the thraldom of absolute power. This has trained that attitude of mind which is the origin of the internal politics of Western people. It has helped to distribute the power of government all over the country and thus has given it a permanent foundation which cannot be tampered with or destroyed by the will of one individual or whim of a group of them. This consciousness of the dignity of the individual has encouraged in the West the freedom of conscience and thought. We in the East come to Europe for this inspiration. We are also dreaming of the time when the individuals belonging to the people of India will have the courage to think for themselves and express their thoughts, feel their strength, know their rights and take charge of their own government.

The Fascist organ is evidently fascinated by the prospect of eco-

nomic self-aggrandizement of the nation at the cost of moral self-respect of the people. But it is the killing of the goose for the sake of the golden eggs. In the olden civilizations the slavery of the people did build for the time being stupendous towers of splendour. But this spirit of slavishness constantly weakened the foundations till the towers came down to the dust, offering as their sole contribution to humanity ruins haunted by venerable ghosts.

In bygone days in India, the state was only a part of the people. The mass of the population had its own self-government in the village community. Dynasties changed but the people always retained the power to manage all that was vital to them. This has saved them from sinking into barbarism, this has given our culture a community through centuries of political vicissitude.

Our Western rulers have destroyed this fundamental structure of our civilization, the civilization based upon obligations of intimate human relationship. And therefore nothing today has been left for the people through which they can express their collective mind, their creative will, realize the dignity of their soul, except the political instrument the foreign model of which is always before their envious gaze. We come to Europe for our lesson in the mastery of this instrument, as Japan has done and has been successful in her purpose. But must our friend, the Fascist philosopher, come to us to copy our political impotence, the result of the surrender of freedom for centuries to the authority of some exclusive reservoir of concentrated power, while rejecting our great ideal of spiritual freedom which has its basis upon the philosophy that infinite truth is everywhere, and that it is for everyone to reach it by removing the obstruction of the self that obscures light?

I am sure that you will be interested to know what was the impression that I have carried from my interview with Mussolini. We met only twice and our meetings were extremely brief owing, very likely, to our mutual difficulty of communication through the slow and interrupted medium of an interpreter.

In the hall which emphasized its bigness by the unusual bareness of its furniture Mussolini has his seat in a distant corner. I believe this gives him the time to observe visitors who approach him, and makes him ready to deal with them. I was not sure of his identity while he was walking towards me to receive me, for he was not tall in proportion to his fame that towers high. But when he came near me I was startled by the massive strength of the head. The lower part of the face, the lips, the smile revealed a singular contradiction to the upper one, and I have often wondered since then, if there was not a secret hesitation in his nature, a timid doubt which was human. Such an admixture of vacillation in a masterful personality makes his power of determination all the more vigilant and strong because of the internecine fight in its own character. But this is a mere surmise.

For an artist it is a great chance to be able to meet a man of personality who walks solitary among those who are mere fragments of a crowd which is always on the move, pressed from behind. Such men are the makers of history and one cannot but feel anxious lest they might

miss their eternity by using all their force in capturing the present by its throat leaving it killed for all future. Men have not altogether been rare who furiously created their world by trampling human materials into the shape of their megalomaniac dreams, at last to burden history with the bleached bones of their short-lived glory, while there were others, the serene souls, who with their light of truth and magic of love have made deserts fruitful along endless stretches of grateful years.

But, to be honest, I must confess that I cannot fully trust my own impression caught from a momentary glimpse of Mussolini with which mingled the emphasis of the surroundings in which I was placed. There have been times when history has played tricks with men and through a combination of accidents has magnified the features of essentially small persons into a parody of greatness. Such a distortion of truth often finds its chance not because these men have an extraordinary power in themselves but because they represent some extraordinary weakness of those who they lead. This produces a mirage of wrong appearance and startles our imagination into a feeling of awe and exaggerated expectation. To be tortured by tyranny is tolerable but to be deluded into the worship of a falsified ideal is humiliating for the whole age which by chance is submitted to it. If Italy has made even a temporary gain through a ruthless politics she may be excused from such an obsession—but for us outsiders who believe in idealism there can be no such excuse. And therefore it would be wise for us to wait before we bring our homage to a person, who has suddenly been forced upon our attention by a catastrophe, till through the process of time all the veils are removed that are woven round him by colourful sensations of the moment.

My letter has run on to a great length. But I hope you will bear with it knowing that it has helped me in making my thoughts clear about my experience in Italy and also explaining the situation in which I have been placed.

Rabindranath Tagore

25 *Fascism Denounced*
This is Tagore's rejoinder to Formichi's letter which appeared in *Manchester Guardian* on 25 August 1926. Tagore's letter, published on 15 September 1926, was written from Berlin.

26 *Protest Against the Policy of Repression*
This open letter against the policy of repression was published on 3 February 1927. This is important evidence of Tagore's consistent stand against all forms of terrorism, the most nefarious being terrorism of the state itself. He had little sympathy for the young freedom-fighters who adopted violence, despite his admiration for their dedication. It was the time when the government, determined to suppress all militant activities, had initiated a reign of terror through monstrous ordinances. Many young men were jailed and several exiled and executed. Tagore's protest came at a time when it was needed most.

27 *Henry Barbusse's Appeal: Tagore's Response*
The first anti-Fascist conference was held in Paris on 23 February 1927. Henry

Barbusse (1873–1935), one of the main organizers, wrote to Tagore for his support. Several other European writers including Romain Rolland joined their voices against the Fascist oppression. This was published in *Visva-Bharati Bulletin* (July 1927).

28 *Freedom*
This letter was written to J.T. Sunderland, an American scholar, then writing a book on the Indian struggle for freedom.

29 *Mother India*

I

'Malicious Piece of Fabrication': Tagore's protest against Catherine Mayo's *Mother India*, published in *Manchester Guardian* (October 1927) and reprinted in *The Modern Review* (October 1927). Mayo (1868–1940) was an American writer. Her *Mother India*, a widely condemned book in India, was published in 1927.

II

Tagore wrote this letter to the editor, *Nation*, New York, on 9 December 1927 from Santiniketan, criticizing Miss Mayo's *Mother India*.

30 *Colour Prejudice*
Tagore's protest against the colour prejudice prevalent among Indians. This letter was published in *The Modern Review* (April 1928).

31 *To the World League for Peace*
In response to the request of Georges Dejan, Director, Ligue Mondiale pour la Paix (World League for Peace) for a message to *The Golden Book of Peace*. The appeal came through Romain Rolland. Tagore wrote it on 3 September 1928.

32 *At the Immigration Office*
During his stay in Canada in May 1929 Tagore received several invitations from different institutions in the USA. He cancelled his programme because of an unfortunate incident at Vancouver. Later he gave an statement explaining the circumstances compelling him to change his programme. This statement (11 May 1929) appeared in *The Japan Advisor*, Tokyo. It was reprinted in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (November 1929).

33 *'East is East'*
This undated letter was published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (April-July 1929, p. 168) with the editorial note that it was from Tagore in answer to an European lady who had expressed her perplexity at not being able 'to break through the reserve of those in the East with whom she dealt in a spirit of sympathy'.

34 *Protest Against the Arrest of Mahatma Gandhi*
Gandhi violated the Salt Law on 6 April 1930 at Dandi. He was arrested on 15 May along with Jawaharlal Nehru. India was passing through an extremely disturbed situation: a serious communal riot took place on 15 May; the famous

raid at the Chittagong Armoury took place on 18 April; a communal riot broke at Sholapur on 8 May, the government imposed Marshal Law and executed three young men. Tagore also wrote a fiery protest against the measures taken at Sholapur in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* (16 May 1930).

35 *India: An Appeal to Idealism*
A letter published in *Spectator* (7 June 1930).

36 *Race and Colour Prejudice*
Message to the 'Universal Relations Peace Conference' in London. Published in *The Friend*, 13 June 1930. Source: Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. III, p. 66.

37 *Faith in British Justice*
Open letter to *Spectator*, London (30 August 1930) (reprinted in Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. III, pp. 101–02) condemning the government's callous silence ignoring the riot in Dacca on 24 May. Tagore came to know about the Dacca riot thanks to Miss Story, his host in Geneva. An American journalist's comments on Tagore's thought and activities relate directly to this as well as other letters of Tagore's reflecting his concern about the Indian political situation. 'Although actively abstaining from politics,' he wrote, 'Tagore revealed, while resting in Geneva, that he is heart and soul for the Indian national movement' (Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabīindra Jībanī*, Vol. III, p. 281).

38 *Message to the Quaker Society of Friends*
Message to the Annual Conference of Quakers in London (20 or 24 May 1930), published in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 8, Part IV, 1931–32, pp. 403–04.

39 *'I Am Proud of My People'*
A statement issued by Tagore while he was in Berlin counteracting the propaganda that he was indifferent to the freedom struggle in India. An extract of the statement appeared in *Natal Witness* on 20 September 1930. *The Modern Review* (August 1930) published a report with the title 'Tagore Proud of His Countrymen' which is as follows:

> Reuter has recently cabled from Berlin that the poet Rabindranath Tagore told an interviewer that he was proud of his countrymen. This piece of news has no chance of turning out false, as certain other mythical interviews did. How deep he loves his country and his countrymen is illustrated by his following poem, among others:
>
> *My Prayer for India*
>
> What is my longing, my dream, my prayer, for my country, my beloved India?
> I dream of her. I fervently pray for her, that she may no longer be in bondage to strangers. But that she may be free!
> Free to follow her own high ideals;
> Free to accomplish her own important mission in the world:
> Free to fill her own God-given place among the great Nations.
>
> (*The Modern Review*, August 1930, p. 240)

40 *Statement Contradicted*
Letter (dated 10 October 1930) to *The New York Times* protesting against the distortion of his opinion about India's independence.

41 *The Women's International League*
Message to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, published in *Pax International*, Geneva. Later reprinted in *The Modern Review* (November 1930, p. 595).

42 *The Colour Bar*
Tagore's letter dated 17 April 1931 to the editor of *Spectator*.

43 *Takagaki*
So impressed was Tagore by Jujitsu and Judo during his stay in Japan that he arranged for the visit of Takagaki, an expert in Jujitsu, to Santiniketan. Tagore wanted the students, particularly the girls, to acquire this ancient art for self-defence. Nokuzo Takagaki was a Japanese state scholar at the University of British Columbia and a highly qualified expert in Jujitsu. He came to Santiniketan in November 1929 and stayed there for about two years. Despite Tagore's efforts, Jujitsu hardly enthused the young Bengalis. This letter is an evidence of Tagore's interest in the propagation of this art.

44 *India and Britain*
A goodwill mission under the leadership of Percy Bertolt from The Friends Society of the Quakers, visited India to explore the possibilities of improvement of Indo-British relations. After a discussion he had with them, Tagore issued this statement on 22 March 1934; it was published in the *Times* on 16 May 1931, and later in *The Modern Review* (July 1931). Tagore advised them to see Gandhi, then at Yerwada jail, Central Prison, but the meeting was not allowed by the government. They however wrote to Gandhi.

45 *On Proselytism*
Indian Social Reformer (Bombay, 11 July 1931) published this letter by Tagore with the editorial comment that 'it was written to one who was intending to come out as a missionary to India' and that it 'will be read with interest and should be carefully considered'.

46 *Sarnath*
The Buddhist community in India reconstructed an ancient *vihar* at Sarnath towards the end of 1931. Tagore sent this message at its inauguration.

47 *Imprisonment of Gandhi*
This is the text of the cable Tagore sent to Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of England, protesting government repression. Gandhi was arrested on 4 January 1932, a week after his return to India from the Second Round Table Conference in London.

48 *Message to Iraq Air Force*
Tagore's message to the priest of the Iraq Air Force, during his flight from Jask

Busheir on 13 April 1932. This is to be found in the Bengali travelogue *Pārasya Yātrī* (1932).

49 *The World's Children*

Tagore's message to the British chapter of the Save the Children International Union, Geneva. Published in *The World's Children* (September 1932). Also reprinted in Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. III, pp. 322–23.

50 *Appeal to America*

The appeal was published in *Dharma*, New York (July-December 1932) with the editorial note: 'This message was brought by the poet's friend and admirer, Mr Cyril Modak, a Christian Indian Nationalist.' Reprinted in Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. II, pp. 649–50.

51 *Welcome Address to Professor Davoud*

At the beginning of 1933 Reza Shah Pehlavi, the Shah of Persia, sent Agha Poure Davoud, a well-known scholar of Iranian and a noted poet, then staying in Germany, to Visva-Bharati as a gesture of his appreciation of Tagore's idea of international understanding. Tagore formally welcomed Professor Davoud on 9 January 1933. Professor Davoud's speech as published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. I, No. 8) is reproduced below.

> I know and realize that many and many have preceded me in the path which I am now taking. India, our neighbour,—India with a nation, claiming the same descent as ours have always been in the closest of contacts with Iran, although because of the vicissitudes of time, we had allowed through neglect, the old ties to be sundered. Just as a poet had grieved about the result of a famine in Damascus when he said:
>
> 'Such a year of famine overlook the city of Damascus.
>
> That friends forgot to bear love for friends.'
>
> We too, intimate neighbours, have practically become like strangers to each other. We are waking up, however, from our sleep of indifference and are going to resume our ancient friendship and re-tie the knots that were unloosened by neglect. And this we must do, unless we too wish to let go from our hands our great spiritual inheritance—the Aryan wisdom, and become soulless and Godless machines of efficiency as in the West.
>
> I am very happy therefore, that after years and years, I am the first person to be officially sent by Iran to India and I hope that like my predecessor, the famous Albiruni (AD 1100) whose achievements I may only try to copy, I may try to learn and understand the culture of India too, and write a book for my own country in consequence.
>
> The journey of Dr Tagore to Persia, very particularly drew the attention of the Persians to India, and just as my dear country is anxious to place before you its culture, ancient and modern, so is it anxious to know about your culture too. . . . In conclusion, therefore, I repeat that I have come not only to lecture before you in my humble way about the culture of Iran, but I have come in the spirit of a student, to make a comparative study of the sister cultures of Iran and India; for, as students

we meet best in the University of the world, and help in spreading the ideal for which the Visva-Bharati was founded by its great founder, and for which it stands today.

Poure Davoud

52 *On the Centenary of Wilberforce*
Tagore sent this message to the centenary celebration meeting at Hull honouring William Wilberforce (1759–1832), the famous English philanthropist.

53 *Deshapriya J.M. Sen Gupta*
One of the great leaders of freedom movement, who died in prison in 1933. Tagore's tribute appeared in *Visva-Bharati News*, Vol. II, No. 1 (August 1933).

54 *Homage to Islam*
Pulin Bihari Sen lists a pamphlet entitled 'Tagore's Homage to Islam' in his *Lectures and Addresses of Rabindranath Tagore.* This four-page pamphlet (10 x 7.5) contained the poet's message in Bengali with an English version which was broadcast on the Prophet's birthday on 25 June (1934?). We have not been able to trace it. Apart from various respectful references to Islam scattered in his writings, Tagore made statements on Islam specifically on three occasions, two of which are included here under the title 'Homage to Islam'. His statement on the Prophet which was transmitted from the Calcutta station of All India Radio on 25 June 1934, could not be traced.

The message on the occasion of Sirat un Nabi which was read out by Sarojini Naidu at a meeting held on Bombay presided over by Justice Mirza Ali Akbar Khan, was published in *Forward* (27 November 1933).

The second message was published in the Prophet number of *The Peshwa* (Jama Masjid, Delhi) in February 1936.

55 *Bihar Earthquake and the Mahatma*
Gandhiji, deeply concerned with the menace of untouchability, described the terrible earthquake in Bihar on 15 January 1934 as a divine chastisement: 'The conviction is growing upon me that this calamity has come upon us on account of the atrocious sin of untouchability.' Tagore, despite his great respect for Gandhi and equally uncompromising in his condemnation of untouchability, felt obliged to protest in a letter on 5 February 1934. Before he sent his statement to the press, Tagore wrote to Gandhi (letter dated 28 January 1934):

> Dear Mahatmaji,
> The press reports that you in a recent speech referring to the recent earthquake in Bihar spoke as follows, 'I want you, the superstition enough [sic] to believe with me that the earthquake is a divine chastisement for the great sin we have committed against those when we describe as Harijan.' I find it difficult to believe it. But if this be your real view on the matter, I do not think it should go unchallenged. Hereafter you will find a rejoinder from me. If you are corectly reported in the press, would you kindly send it to the press? I have not sent it myself for publication, for I would be the last person to criticize you on unreal facts.
>
> (Source: *Rabīndra Bīkṣā*, 26.)

Gandhi replied to it in an article in *Harijan* entitled 'Bihar and Untouchability'.

56 *Protest against the Nazis*
A letter to N.E.B. Ezra, editor, *Israel's Messenger* (published on 3 August 1934) in protest against the Nazi barbarism, about which Tagore read in this paper. Tagore had already protested against the humiliation caused to Einstein by the Nazi government. This letter was written on 27 June though misprinted as 17 June (see Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. III, p. 513).

57 *My Ideals with regard to the Sreebhavana*
Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. III, No. 2, August 1934). An address delivered to the girl students.

58 *Communal Award: To Madan Mohan Malaviya*
(a) and (c): These are letters by Tagore (dated August 1934 and 18 August 1934 respectively) written to Madan Mohan Malaviya, expressing his position in respect of the infamous Communal Award made by Ramsay MacDonald.

(b): This is the telegram sent to Malaviya probably on 13 August 1934. See also Tagore's Presidental address, 15 July 1936, on Communal Award, Section II of this volume.

59 *Farewell to Abdul Ghafar Khan*
Khan visited Santiniketan on 31 August 1934 to meet his son Abdul Ghani Khan, then a student at Kala Bhavan. An Urdu version of this speech was read by Tagore at his farewell.

60 *My Young Friends*
Speech delivered at the opening of the Montessori School, Rajghat, Benaras on 2 December 1934. Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. III, No. 6, December 1934, pp. 43–44).

61 *A Letter to an English Friend*
A letter written on 15 August 1934, published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. V, No. 6, December 1935, pp. 44–?) with the following editorial note:

> With the permission of the President, we take the liberty of publishing below a letter which he wrote some time ago to an English lady who felt hurt at the spirit of 'intellectual pessimism' and 'political bitterness' she found quite common in certain circles at Santiniketan. The subject matter of this letter is of immense interest both to ourselves and to our English friends who sometimes feel puzzled at certain streaks in our outlook on life in general and political conditions in particular, and this is the sole justification of publishing the letter which otherwise is quite personal.

62 *Ishopanishat*
A letter to Mahadev Desai (date not known) published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. III, No. 10, April 1935, pp. 77–78).

63 *Ramchandra Sharma*
Tagore issued this appeal in September 1935 in connection with the fast undertaken by Pandit Ramchandra Sharma, a young man from Jaipur, to stop the practice of animal sacrifice in the Kalighat temple. Tagore also wrote a poem in his honour. See Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabīndra Jībanī*, Vol. IV, 1955, pp. 33–51.

64 *'A Message of Condolence'*
A message of condolence to Maharajkumari Vidyavati Devi of Kasmunda, dated 27 December 1935.

65 *To Indian National Congress*
Message to the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Indian National Congress dated 27 December 1935. Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. IV, No. 7, January 1936).

66 *The Rice We Eat*
The paper published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. IV, No. 7, January 1936, p. 51) was written on 28 December 1935 in defence of *dhenki*-hulled rice.

67 *Message to World Peace Congress*
Message to the World Peace Congress at Brussels. Tagore sent the message on 5 September 1936.

68 *New Education Fellowship*
Message to the New Education Fellowship Conference held in Calcutta in February 1936. Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (February 1936). For more details, see Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabīndra Jībanī*, Vol. IV, p. 45f.

69 *The English in India*
Extracts from a letter written to a friend in England on the contemporary political condition in India, published in *Manchester Guardian*, on 2 October 1936. Reprinted from Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. IV, pp. 313–16.

70 *Spanish Civil War*
This appeal was printed in a pamphlet entitled *Spain* published from Calcutta, in March 1937. Tagore was the President of the All India Committee on League Against Fascism and War. Source: Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. VI.

71 *Appeal to the United Party of Sind*
The United Party of Sind, a party of the minority community, then engaged in political bargaining, was warned by Tagore not to be allowed to weaken communal harmony by governmental offers of ministerial posts. The appeal was published in *The Hindu* on 25 April 1937.

72 *In Defence of the Workers on Strike*
This appeal made by Tagore on 29 April 1937 appeared in *The Hindu* the

following day. The workers in the jute mills of Bengal had been on strike since February 1937 demanding higher wages and better service conditions. The government—then controlled by Fazlul Haq—adopted oppressive measures to break the strike. See Nepal Majumdar, *Jātīyatā āntarjātikatā o Rabīndranāth*, Vol. IV, pp. 145–46.

73 *On India*
Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. VI, No. 1, July 1937). It is not clear whether it was written for a particular occasion or a reproduction of an earlier writing. The idea expressed in these lines, however, appeared again and again in various writings of Tagore.

74 *Appeal for Andaman Prisoners*
Tagore took a leading role in the movement for the release of Andaman prisoners. On 2 August 1937 at a meeting at Town Hall, Calcutta, demanding the release of the prisoners—who were then on an indefinite hunger strike in protest against the inhuman torture by the police; three of them died—Tagore made a touching speech. He also made this appeal to the general public.

When the condition of the Andaman prisoners began to worsen—the inmates of the Presidency and Alipore Central Jail also joined the hunger strike—Tagore sent Amiya Chakravarti as his emissary to Sir John Anderson, the Governor of Bengal, urging him to take prompt action. Tagore condemned the government again at a meeting on 14 August which was observed as Protest Day by the Indian National Congress. Tagore wrote this confidential letter to Anderson.

75 *In Response to Rasbehari Bose's Appeal*
This is Tagore's letter in response to Rasbehari Bose's cable: 'Indian merchants, students and residents here request you to prevent Congress and Pandit Nehru's anti-Japanese activities for the sake of Indian interests and Indo-Japanese friendship.' This letter dated 10 October 1937 appeared in the press next day.

76 *Vande Mataram*
In response to Jawaharlal Nehru's request, Tagore sent this statement (dated 26 October 1937), which was issued to the press by the Working Committee on the controversy over the song written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. A majority of the Muslims found the song idolatrous. A group of Hindus also shared their perception. The Congress Committee accepted Tagore's suggestion. Nehru observed: '. . . the first two stanzas are such that it is impossible for any one to take objection to, unless he is maliciously inclined. Remember, we are thinking in terms of a national song for all India.'

It may be mentioned here that the song was first set to tune by the poet himself and also sung by him at the Twelfth Session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in 1896.

77 *Appeal to Journalists*
This is an appeal to editors requesting them to avoid emphasis on 'popular

weakness' during the Secondary Education Bill agitation. It appeared in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on 25 December 1937.

78 *Jagadish Chandra Bose*

I

A tribute to his friend, the famous scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose, who died in December 1937. Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (December 1937).

II

Memorial Address to Jagadish Chandra in 1937.

79 *The British Constitution in India*
Letter written on 28 February 1938, published in *Manchester Guardian* (10 March 1938), and reprinted in *Visva-Bharati News* (April 1938, pp. 175–76).

80 *To the People of China*

I

Text of the message was sent to Chiang Kai-Shek through Professor Tan Yun Shan, Director of Cheena Bhavan, Santiniketan. Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (July 1938).

II

Published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (26 December 1939). Address to Chiang Kai-Shek sent through Sir Stafford Cripps who came to see Tagore in Calcutta on his way to China.

81 *'Fascism' of the State of Travancore*
Tagore's protest against the repressive measures adopted by the Travancore State. The statement was issued on 4 October 1938 and was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* on 6 October 1938.

82 *Letters to Czecho-slovakia*

I

Tagore wrote this letter to Professor V. Lesny on 15 October 1938, expressing his sympathy for the suffering Czechoslovakia. He also sent an English translation of his poem *Prāyaścitta* (included in *Nabajātak*, 1940) which is to be found in *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. I, pp. 385–86.

II

Another letter to Lesny on the occasion of Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia.

83 *Tagore and Noguchi*
The full text of the correspondences between Tagore and the Japanese poet Yone Noguchi on the Sino-Japanese conflict. *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* (November 1938) first published it under the title 'Poet to Poet'.

84 *W.B. Yeats*
Tribute to W.B. Yeats who died on 30 January 1939. Published in *Hindustan Standard* the following day. For Tagore's serious study of Yeats one has to read the Bengali essay, published in *Prabāsī* in 1912, later included in *Rabīndra*

Racanābalī, XXVI (Visva-Bharati) and also in *Pather Sañcay* (1939).

85 *Bihar Cooperative Federation: 21st Conference*
Tagore's message to the 21st Conference of the Bihar Cooperative Federation on 20 August 1939. Published in *Hindustan Standard* (22 August 1939).

86 *A Tribute to Mahatma Gandhi*
From the commemoration volume edited by S. Radhakrishnan in celebration of the seventieth birthday of Mahatma Gandhi in 1939.

87 *European Order and World Order*
Tagore wrote this letter on 27 December 1939 to Elmhirst on receiving his pamphlet, along with a letter in which he wrote, 'in spite of the war I can't help feeling that great days are in front of us'. Published in *The Modern Review* (February 1940, p. 132).

88 *'Freedom of Mind'*
Tagore's response to the appeal of Dr H.W. Nevinson, President, National Council of Civil Liberties, England, seeking his support against government interference in freedom of speech. Nevinson pointed out the contradiction in British policy at home and in other countries in its empire: 'At a time when Great Britain is fighting against the German form of Fascism, it is well to examine how far recent legislation and practice in the British Empire has approximated to those alien standards.' Tagore's letter dated 4 February 1940 was published in different newspapers two days later. Reprinted in *Visva-Bharati News* (February 1940, p. 61).

89 *Telegram to Roosevelt*
Tagore's telegram to President Franklyn D. Roosevelt on the fall of Paris during World War II, from Kalimpong in June 1940. Printed from his own hand-written draft. Source: J.L. Dees, *Tagore and America* (printed and published by USIS, Calcutta, not dated).

90 *Bengal's Great Inheritance*
Tagore's message to the conference protesting the Secondary Education Bill.

91 *Man's Lost Heritage*
Published in *Visva-Bharati News*, (Vol. IX, No. 5, November 1940) with the following prefatory comments by Anil Kumar Chanda, Tagore's Secretary.

> During the last few days whenever Gurudeva had respite from acute physical discomfort he asked for latest news in the newspapers. He was greatly pleased to hear of the British decision to reopen the Burma route to China. During these intervals Gurudeva has now and again given utterance to thoughts which had been pressing heavily on his mind. The vehemence and persistence with which some of the thoughts were expressed by him indicated how intensely he had felt them. As much as we could remember or note down I have quoted below. Wherever possible his own words have been reproduced but unfortunately we could do so only to a very limited extent.

This was also published in *Hindustan Standard* under the title 'Gross Betrayal of Humanity: Insane Orgy of Violence and Destruction', on 12 October 1940.

92 *Welcome to Xu Beihong*
Tagore's welcome speech (published in *Visva-Bharati News*, February 1940, p. 581) to the Chinese painter, Ju Peon or Xu Beihong (1895–1953) who came to Santiniketan on 21 December 1940. Tagore also opened the exhibition of his paintings numbering nearly 150. In his reply Xu Beihong said:

> Santiniketan is a place which corresponds to my ideal of a centre of art and culture.... The whole world should make a pilgrimage here in order to breathe the joyful atmosphere of creative endeavour undertaken here under the direct inspiration of India's great poet. My visit here is that of a pilgrim. I have come not to give but to receive the great gifts that India may have to bestow upon my country and people as she did in the days gone by.

93 *Message to 'Forward'*
Message to the second anniversary of *Forward*, a newspaper originally established by C.R. Das, revived later by a group of political detenus. Published in *The Modern Review*, February 1941, p. 137.

94 *Reply to Miss Rathbone*
Miss E. Rathbone (1872–1951) was President of the National Union of Societies of Equal Citizenship since 1919 and also an independent member of the Parliament of Combined Universities since 1929. Mainly directed against Nehru who was in jail, Rathbone's 'open letter to Indians' was published in June 1941. Although seriously ill—he died two months later—Tagore raised his voice of protest against this insolence. Krishna Kripalani informs us: 'Gurudev's reply to Miss Rathbone's letter was drafted by me. He was very excited when he read her "open letter" but was too weak to write a reply himself. So he sent for me and told me what he thought of it and asked me to draft a reply for him' (*Sāmayik Patre Rabīndra Prasaṅga, Prabāsī*, p. 471). Miss Rathbone appealed to Indian leaders to sink their differences till the war against the Nazis was won. Later in a meeting in London on 17 July she 'refused to accept' Tagore's letter 'as his true reply'. 'He could', she said, 'only have given the reply that he did because he was so ill as not to be himself.' (Quoted in *The Skeleton in the Cupboard*, published by C.K.B. Naidu, Khar, Bombay, 1941, p. 41.)

B. On Books

Thirty Songs from the Punjab and Kashmir
Tagore wrote a Foreword to this book published in February 1913. These songs were recorded by Ratan Devi and translated by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

To the Nation
Introduction to the English translation of Paul Richard's book published by James B. Pond, New York, 1917.

The Web of Indian Life
Introduction to Sister Nivedita's *The Web of Indian Life* (1904), published by Advaita Ashram. Tagore's Introduction was written on 21 October 1917.

'A Great Channel for Communication'
Foreword to *The Bengali Book of English Verse,* edited by Theodore Douglas Dunn, Longmans, Green and Co., Bombay, 1918.

The Robbery of the Soil
Tagore's Introduction to L.K. Elmhirst's book, *The Robbery of the Soil,* read as part of the extension lecture at Visva-Bharati in Calcutta on 28 July 1922. Source; Elmhirst, *Poet and Plowman,* Visva-Bharati, 1975.

Zoroastrian Hymns
Introduction to *Zoroastrian Hymns* by D.J. Irani. We have reproduced this from *Tagore and British Press* (edited by Kalyan Kundu *et al,* The Tagore Centre (UK), London, 1990). *The British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books,* Vol. 52 (London, 1959, p. 989) gives the following information: Dinshah Jijibhai Irani, *The Divine Songs of Zarathustra,* with an introduction by Rabindranath Tagore, pp. 79, George Allen and Unwin, London, Macmillan, New York, 1924.

The Case for India
Tagore wrote this short essay on 11 February 1931 on Will Durant's newly published book, *The Case for India* (published by Simon and Schuster, New York). It appeared in *The Modern Review* (March 1931). Durant's book emerged out of his experience of the political and economic life of India. For some strange reason, none of the copies of this book ordered by the Bengali booksellers reached India. Durant dedicated the book to Tagore with the words, 'you alone are sufficient reason why India should be free'.

Voiceless India
Tagore wrote a Foreword to this interesting work on Indian society written by Gertrude Emerson Sen. The book was published in 1930 from America to which Pearl S. Buck wrote an Introduction. An English edition appeared the next year. An Indian edition was issued from Benaras in 1946.

Christ
Tagore wrote this letter to C.F. Andrews, soon after reading his book on Christ. This letter dated 2 August 1932 was printed in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. I, No. 9, March 1933).

Rebel India
Tagore reviewed this book written by Henry Noel Brailsford published in 1931 from London. The review appeared in *The Modern Review* (January 1933).

Preface to 'Deliverance'
This Preface was written (probably in 1940) for the English translation of Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's Bengali novelette *Niṣkṛti* (1917), translated by Dilip Kumar Roy and published in 1944, three years after Tagore's death.

When Peacocks Called
This is the Foreword Tagore wrote to Hilde Seligman's *When Peacocks Called* (1940), a novel based on the times of Ashoka the Great.

IV CONVERSATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

Marguerite Wilkinson and Tagore
Tagore gave an interview on Indian poetry to Marguerite Wilkinson. Published in *The Touchstone*, Vol. VII, No. 5, New York, February 1921. Reprinted in *Saṅgīt Cintā* (Visva-Bharati, 1994).

Benedetto Croce and Tagore
Source: *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, IV (October 1926). From the notes by P.C. Mahalanobis who was present during a brief meeting between Croce and Tagore in the early morning of 14 June 1926, in a hotel in Rome. Despite Tagore's intention to meet Bendetto Croce, the greatest living Italian philsopher of the time, Formichi carefully avoided Tagore's requests. Accidentally Tagore met a young captain, Carmelo Umberto Rapicavoli, a member of the Royal Army, during his meeting with the King of Italy. This young man who was a former student of Croce, told Mahalanobis that he could arrange a meeting with Croce, if however, Mussolini agrees. During his second meeting with Mussolini Tagore expressed his keenness to meet Croce. Formichi dismissed the proposal and Mussolini pleaded ignorance of Croce's whereabouts. However, Mussolini asked Formichi to consider the possibility. Croce was not in Rome but Rapicavoli brought him to Tagore's hotel early in the morning and the conversation ended before Formichi's arrival in the hotel.

Although Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis mentions in her book that Croce told Tagore not to trust the government propaganda—the records available here do not refer to the political situation at all. In fact Rolland was quite unhappy that Croce chose to be silent on Fascism and failed to warn Tagore.

Romain Rolland and Tagore
The relation between Rolland and Tagore began in 1916. Rolland found a similarity of thought between him and Tagore, when he read a synopsis of Tagore's lecture 'The Message of India' in an American journal, which he included in his *Aux Peuples Assassines*, the number 2 publication of Bibliotheque des Jennesses Socialistes published in 1916. They met for the first time in 1921.

The first two conversations included here took place at Villeneuve in

June 1926 soon after Tagore's Italian trip and the third one in August 1930 in Geneva. The last one was first published in *Asia* (March 1937). Our source is: *Rolland and Tagore*, edited by Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani, Visva-Bharati, 1945.

Salvadori and Tagore

At Zurich in July 1926, soon after his Italian visit which had made Tagore controversial in Europe because of his praises of Mussolini, he met Signora Salvadori, herself a victim of Fascist atrocities. Her husband Professor Salvadori, a Socialist leader, then living in Switzerland in exile, was too ill to meet Tagore. She was one of the eye-witnesseses of the monstrosities of Mussolini. This conversation made Tagore rudely aware of the nature of political persecution in the Fascist regime. (Source: *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, October 1926).

Angelica Balban and Tagore

Source: *My Life as a Rebel* (Greenwood Publishers, New York, 1965, pp. 312–14), quoted in Chinmohan Sehanabish, *Rabīndranāth o Biplabī Samāj*, Calcutta, pp. 116–19.

Interview with F.L. Minigerode

Minigerode interviewed Tagore in November 1916; the interview was published in *New York Times* under the title 'Lack of Ideals' and subtitled 'Eastern Poet on Civilization'. Source: *The Weeekly Press*, Christchurch, New Zealand, 2 December 1926. Press cutting preserved at the Rabindra Bhavan.

H.G. Wells and Tagore

This conversation between H.G. Wells and Tagore took place in Geneva in early June 1936. It was recorded by Dr Sudhir Ghosh and Amiya Chakravarty. Also published in *Asia* (March 1937). Our source is *A Tagore Reader*, edited by Amiya Chakravarty, Boston, 1961.

Einstein and Tagore

Tagore met Einstein for the time in Berlin in 1926. We have not been able to procure the text of the conversation they had. Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay (see *Rabīndra Jībanī*, Vol. III, p. 1961) informs us that a Bengali translation of that conversation was published in *Bicitrā* (Āśvin, 1338, pp. 292–95). The 14 July 1930 conversation (which was appended to *The Religion of Man*) was first published in the *The New York Times* (10 August 1930). About Einstein's resentment about its publication, Andrew Robinson writes in a letter dated 5 January 1995 (published in *The Statesman*, Delhi, 24 January 1995): 'A letter from the *New York Times* to Tagore dated July 12 makes it clear that Einstein sent and approved the text of the conversation before publication. Yet, in October 1930 Einstein wrote to Romain Rolland that the July 14 conversation "should of course, never have been published" as if it had appeared without his consent.'

Conversations in Russia

The source is *Letters from Russia* (translated by Sasadhar Sinha, Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1960, Appendix VI). They had been prepared by P.C. Mahalanobis

and published in the *Visva-Bharati Bulletin.* Also published in *The Modern Review* (November and December 1930) without mentioning the name of the chronicler. There are some minor differences between the texts published in the *Visva-Bharati Bulletin* (which has been included in *Letters from Russia*) and in *The Modern Review.*

Interview with the 'Jewish Standard': On the Palestinian Problem
This interview was published on 28 November 1930. Reprinted from *Rabindra Bhavan* (Vol. II, Issues 1 and 2, Autumn-Winter 1990), edited by Supriya Roy. The interview is of great significance in view of the fact that none of our national leaders had any clear view on the Palestine problem at that time. Six years later, the Indian National Congress adopted a coherent Palestine policy, under the leadership of Nehru.

Interviews in Persia
Source: *Pārasya Yātrī* (Bengali travelogue written by Tagore in 1932), edited by Pulin Behari Sen, Visva-Bharati, 1985.

Tagore on Films
This report was published in *The Observer,* London, on 8 August 1925 under the title 'Films in India/Dr Tagore's Views/A Libel on Western Civilization', with the following prefatory remarks:

> The over-sensationalism of the modern film was strongly deprecated by Rabindranath Tagore in an interview which he gave to Mr J. Aubrey Rees, of the British Empire Film Institute.

The interview also appeared in a different form in *Natal Advertiser,* Durban, South on 11 September 1926, under the caption 'False Guides'. *Natal Advertiser* commented that 'all over the world Hollywood is proclaiming to the native races that white civilization is a world of crooks, murderers, half-witted fools and sharpers.' It also mentioned Aldus Huxley who 'deplores these presentations of false ideas in the course of an article in *Vanity Fair,* and depicts cinema houses packed with Javanese absorbing these wonders of Western civilization'. Quoting Tagore's comments, it points out that 'here in South Africa the same class of pictures being shown rightly in coloured people's cinema and are doing an immense amount of harm.'

APPENDIX A

The verses collected here could not be included in Volume One of *English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore,* which is their right place.

To Shakespeare
Written in 1915 at the request of the Shakespeare Tercentenary Celebration Committee. It is the poet's own translation of a sixteen-line Bengali poem beginning with the words *yedin udile tumi viśva kabi,* included in *Balākā* (poem

no. 39). The English translation was included in *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, edited by Israel Gollancz, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1916.

'A Weary Pilgrim . . .'
Tagore wrote this poem on his way to Japan on 3 May 1929, for the Japanese magazine *Ashahi Shimbum*. It was also published in *The Modern Review* (August 1929).

Appeal for Relief
This is Tagore's own translation of the verse he wrote as an appeal to the people as the President of the Bengal Congress Flood and Famine Relief Committee. Tagore agreed to become the President at the request of Subhas Chandra Bose, who published the appeal in *Liberty* on 6 September. The Bengali verse is as follows:

annahārā cāy ūrddhvapāne
ḍāke bhagabāne
ye deśe se bhagabān mānuṣer hṛdaye hṛdaye
sāḍā den bīrya rūpe dayārūpe duhkhe, kaṣṭe, bhaye
se deśer dainya habe kṣay habe tār jay.

The Cleanser
This is Tagore's translation of the Bengali poem 'Methar' written by Satyendranath Datta (to be found in his *Kuhu o Kekā*, 1912), published in *The Modern Review* as well as in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* in July 1955. This translation of it appeared in *Harijan* on 11 February 1933.

'Freedom from Fear'
This poem written on 27 September 1933 on the death anniversary of Raja Rammohun Roy, was sent as a message to *Forward*, a daily newspaper published from Calcutta. Source: Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabīndra Jībanī*, Vol. III, 1952, p. 365.

Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das
This is the English translation of a Bengali quatret written on the occasion of the inauguration of the Deshabandhu Memorial on 16 June 1935. Published in *Visva-Bharati News* (Vol. IV, No. 1, July 1935, p. 1.).

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa
Published in *Prabuddha Bharat*, written on the occasion of the centenary celebration of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, in December 1935.

'Speak to Me, My Friend'
Translation of the song, beginning with the words '*balo balo bandhu balo*', written in 1917(?)

My Prayer for India
Published in *The Modern Review* (August 1930). See no. 39, 'I am proud of my people'.

Two Poems Written in Iran

(i) This poem along with its Bengali original, was presented by Tagore to the Shah of Iran, during his visit to Iran in 1902. The original Bengali begins with the words, '*āmār hṛdaye atīta-smṛtir*', etc.

(ii) Tagore wrote a Bengali poem (*Irān, tomār yata bulbul*) on his birthday in Iran. This is his own rendering into English. Both the Bengali and the English translations were read out at the birthday meeting.

You Have Come to Me

Translation of the Bengali song *lukiye āsa ādhār rāte* (*Gītimālya*, 1912–13). Source: Malina Ray, *Rabindranāth-Andrews Patrābalī*, 1967, p. 155.

APPENDIX B

The Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

This speech of Tagore at Stockholm on 26 May 1921 has been made available to us by Dr Per Sorbom, Director General, The Swedish Institute, from the archives of the Swedish Academy.

Tagore could not be present at the Nobel Award Ceremony on 10 December 1913 at Stockholm, but sent a telegram accepting the prize, which was received by the British *chargé d'affaires* in Sweden on his behalf. At a special ceremony in Calcutta on 29 January 1914 Lord Carmichael, Governor of Bengal, delivered the medal and citation to Tagore. (For details see Prashanta Kumar Pal, *Rabi Jibani*, Vol. VI, Calcutta 1993, p. 455). We do not know if Tagore made any speech on that occasion. This address included in this volume, though delivered about seven years after the official ceremony, can be described as the Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech. (See also, Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, *Rabīndra Jibanī*, Vol. III, Calcutta, 1952, p. 56.)

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FIRST WORDS OF THE VERSES